1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



died of wounds and fever. Because the Europeans lacked arms the war dragged on,[1] and the power of the slavers was finally broken only in 1895, when Sir Harry Johnston came up the Lake with a well-armed force.[2]

German missionaries of the Berlin and Moravian missions arrived in 1891, and established themselves at a number of stations in Nyakyusa country.[3] The Songwe had by that time been agreed upon as the boundary between Nyasaland and German East Africa, and the German administration followed hard on the heels of the missionaries.[4] Twenty years later war broke out between England and Germany; there was fighting throughout Rungwe district, and many Nyakyusa were impressed as carriers. The absorption of the Nyakyusa into a world society was considerably accelerated by war.

### 4. *The form of Nyakyusa society*

Not only was the Nyakyusa valley long isolated from the outside world, but it was divided into a number of small, independent chiefdoms, whose members had few dealings with people beyond their own chiefdoms and those immediately adjoining. Each family produced for its own needs, so that trade was the merest trickle; and marriage outside the boundaries of the chiefdom was discouraged, since beyond the jurisdiction of one's own chief there was no security for life and property. A plea against a man of a neighbouring chiefdom might not be heard by the defendant's chief. Nyakyusa men enlarged to us on the dangers and difficulties of travelling even twenty miles from home, before the coming of the Europeans; a journey from Selya to Tukuyu (twenty-five miles) was said to take three days, because travellers had to seek cover so often.

The number and size of chiefdoms varied; for a continuous process of splitting, together with periodical conquest and re-absorption, was going on and, as we have seen, the area of Nyakyusa occupation was expanding. In 1938 the Nyakyusa themselves

[1] Leopold, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 50–180.
[2] H. H. Johnston, *British Central Africa* (1897), p. 142.
[3] A. Merensky, *Deutsche Arbeit am Nyassa* (1894); T. Hamilton, *Twenty Years of Pioneer Mission in Nyasaland* (1902).
[4] F. Fülleborn, *Deutsch Ost-Afrika*, Band IX (1906).

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



recognized over 100 chiefdoms, mustering anything from 100 to 3,000 adult men apiece.

Although no centralized political authority existed before the German occupation, certain groups of chiefdoms joined in common rituals directed to common ancestors. We traced four such centres of worship among the Nyakyusa; the most important being Lubaga, in the middle of the valley, where Kinga priests (from the top of the Livingstone mountains) join with many Nyakyusa chiefdoms in sacrifice to Lwembe, who is claimed as the ancestor both of the chiefs of the Nyakyusa proper, and of the Kinga. At LiKyala, on the Lake-shore plain, Kinga also join in sacrifice with the surrounding Nyakyusa chiefdoms. In Ngonde the chief connected with a similar centre of worship, Mbande, developed far-reaching secular as well as religious powers; and by the time the Europeans arrived he was established as a paramount chief with the title of the Kyungu. This development was directly connected with the fact that Ngonde traded with the outside world, and that their Kyungu, through his control of ivory, was able also to control the guns and cloth which came into the country:[1] the Nyakyusa, remaining isolated, remained politically disunited.

Besides sacrificing to a distant ancestor in company with the representatives of a large group of chiefdoms, two or more chiefs who are neighbours participate in a sacrifice at the grave in which their common father, or grandfather, is buried. Thus common worship links both large groups of chiefdoms, whose chiefs are more or less distantly related, and small groups of contiguous chiefdoms whose chiefs are close kinsmen. The sacrifices made are to the chiefs of immediately preceding generations, and to certain great heroes of the distant past, such as Lwembe and Kyala.

All these sacrifices are believed to bring rain and fertility, for the well-being of each chiefdom is thought to be bound up with the health of the chief and the goodwill of his ancestors.

The Nyakyusa are all agreed that their chiefs, *abanyafyale*, are 'strangers' who came down from the Livingstone mountains eight or ten generations ago, and found the valley already occupied by people who had no knowledge of fire, but ate their food raw. The chiefs brought fire with them—some say, cattle also;

[1] Godfrey Wilson, op. cit., pp. 9, 30-38.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



the establishment of the mother of an heir in each, the future division of the country is foreshadowed. Finally, it is the occasion on which power is formally handed over to the younger generation, and the success of the new headmen as war leaders is put to the test.

*c. Relations between villages within one chiefdom*

Within each chiefdom, then, there are two sides, each under a senior headman. On each side are two or more age-villages of contemporaries of the chief—men of the ruling generation. Attached to these villages are boys' villages made up of the younger brothers and sons of contemporaries of the chief. They live separately from their fathers and may have their own village leaders, but legally each boys' village is subject to the authority of the headman of its parent village. On each side there are also two or more villages of old men, contemporaries of the chief's father, whose headmen have ritual functions. Each village established at a 'coming out' ceremony has considerable autonomy under its own headman, but it is subject to the senior headman of the side it belongs to in two ways: cases not settled by a village headman go to the senior headman of the side, and a senior headman leads the villages of his side in war and communal hunts. Even villages of old men are subject to the authority of the senior headman of the ruling generation on the side of the country where they live. Boys and young men of the generation which had not yet 'come out' used to fight and hunt as village groups under the leadership of the senior headman (of their fathers' generation) on the side of the country to which they belonged. Whether or not each boys' village was also subject in war and chase, as in legal disputes, to the authority of the headman of its parent village is not clear. Certainly each boys' village formed a defined segment within any larger group.

To recapitulate, there are always villages of three generations in existence—those of contemporaries of the late chief, the headmen of which have ritual functions; those of mature men, contemporaries of the ruling chief, whose headmen have administrative and military functions; and those of boys and young men, contemporaries of the heir, who have not yet 'come out', and who fight under the leadership of their fathers' senior headman.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



[63] 561 621

Sometimes, as we shall see presently, villages of a fourth generation exist also.

Each age-grade, or generation, covers a span of 30 to 35 years, and each village comprises an age-set with a span of 5 to 8 years, though this is longer in sub-chiefdoms (*vide infra*, p. 37). The average age of members in each grade varies with the date of the last 'coming out' ceremony. Just before the ceremony the elders with ritual functions are those over 65 or 70; the mature men of the ruling generation those between 35 and 65; and the 'boys' who have not yet come out, those between 10 and 35. Just after the ceremony the ruling generation consists of those between about 10 and 35, anyone over 35 being an elder. Those just too young to participate in one 'coming out' may be just too old to participate in the next. The village of Katumba in Mwaipopo's country was in this position: it had been created after the 'coming out' of the young chief Mwankuga, but informants were uncertain whether or not it would be established as a separate village at the 'coming out' of his heir Mwanyilo (*vide* Document, p. 183).

622 643 561 621

The two senior headmen of a new chiefdom are chosen from the two senior villages established at a 'coming out' ceremony, so that a commoner's chance of holding high office is greatest when he is just a little older than a chief's heirs. The senior village of one generation begets the senior villages of the next (*vide* Document, pp. 180-3). Thus, though the son of a village headman in one generation cannot become a village headman in the succeeding generation, there is a tendency for leadership within the chiefdom to pass from *one group* of men to their sons. Those who participate in a 'coming out' while very young tend to have least authority in the country, and are superseded when still under forty by the generation of their sons. The immediate contemporaries of a chief, i.e. those with whom he lives during boyhood, have a special bond with him all through life; and it may sometimes happen that when a chief dies young and is replaced by a brother (his own son being too young to inherit) a junior village comes into prominence because its members have been 'the companions' of the new chief. Bulindanajo in Mwaipopo's country was a village of this kind: Mwaipopo I had died young, and was succeeded by his brother Mwaipopo II ('Mwambene') who had 'come out' as a youth in Bulindanajo, and his immediate contemporaries from that village maintained a special bond with him.

Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



oretically the territorial arrangement is one in which the
s of the ruling generation lie at the centre of the country,
surrounded by satellite villages of their sons, while smaller
s of old men lie on the boundaries. In practice—at least
days—the pattern is more complex, with old men's villages
ead in between those of the ruling generation. From the
of its establishment as a separate chiefdom at the 'coming
the future division of the country is adumbrated: there is a
headman in each half of the country with villages sub-
ate to him, and the mother of an heir in each half. On the
dary between the halves stand the ritual trees, landmarks
to see.

and locality coincide, while kinship cuts across local
ing, fathers and sons, and very often brothers, being in
ent villages. But kinsmen tend to be established in the same
f a country, and so to remain within one chiefdom. Kinship
are extended in some measure to the villages of the chief-
which are classified as those of 'our fathers', 'our elder
ers', 'our young brothers', and 'our sons'. Women have no
share in the age-organization: their membership of a village
on their relationship to some man—father, husband, bro-
s heir—and the age-range of women within one village is
wide.

ages very considerably in size. Boys' villages, as we have
begin with a dozen members or less, and the villages of old
re often very small also; we knew one with only 10 house-
, another with 11. The villages of young and middle-aged
ommonly vary between 20 and 50 households, with 30 as a
verage in the hills. In Mwaipopo's country there were 540
ers on the roll and we recorded 19 established villages and
s' villages.[1] Some members of the boys' villages, and some
g men, were not on the tax-roll, so that the average was
o boys or men in each village. Villages in the plain are
what larger, averaging around 40 households.

n's villages are usually subdivided into sections under the
ship of assistant headmen, appointed by the headmen of the
s. These assistants do not share in the 'coming out' cere-

[1] See p. 59, ch. 8. The tax registers are our guide to the number of villages
these several villages are commonly lumped together as one under a
village headman.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN1? Ngonde FN1? Nyakyusa



●631 In the chiefdom of Mwaipopo,* with which we were well acquainted, there are three such minor chiefdoms. In one no heir survived; but the heirs in the other two went through the 'coming out' ceremony with their superior chiefs, and the young men from each of the three formed a separate village, attached to one or other of Mwaipopo's two heirs. How many generations these subordinate chiefdoms survive as separate groups is not certain: the three in Mwaipopo's country were chiefdoms of his junior brothers which had lost their independence to him. In his case four brothers had 'come out' together, and the senior had conquered the others. Probably at the coming out of Mwaipopo's grandson these subordinate chiefdoms will appear only as villages, and no heir from them will be treated as a chief.

This formation of subordinate chiefdoms is a traditional variation of the standard pattern still going on. There are further modifications which are modern.

*f. Modern modifications*

643 177 In 1926, as has been noted, the British Administration created new 'Native Authorities'. The traditionally independent chiefs of the Nyakyusa were grouped together into eleven court districts,* and in each district a 'Native Court' was set up, consisting of the various chiefs and their village headmen, under the hereditary presidency of one of the chiefs, who thereby became senior to all the others in that Court district. Salaries for chiefs were introduced, the senior chiefs receiving far higher salaries than the others; the meetings of each Court are now always held in the territory of the senior chief (*umulifyale umhalwombe*), and to this Court has been transferred a great deal of the legal business which, before 1926, was transacted by each chief sitting with his own village headmen in his own chiefdom. The chiefs themselves were consulted in the selection of the Court presidents, and those chosen were normally the chiefs with the greatest number of men in each particular Court district.

The introduction of salaries has had a profound effect upon the relative status of the two young chiefs who 'come out' together. When an ordinary chief, with a small salary, dies, the Government recognizes the first son alone as chief and pays the whole

* There are two other courts in Rungwe district for Nkisi and Lambya.

[181]

## 1. VILLAGES IN MWAIPOPO'S CHIEFDOM (1958)

*Information from numerous informants*

| Chief's area | Chief | Sub-Chief | Senior Headman | Headman | Village | Category | Legal Authority | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Mwaipopo[1] | | Nyakubwa | | UPENDA | Senior village of Mwaipopo | | Village survives only thanks to the gathering of many living together as friends, kinsmen, or under pain of Mwaipopo and near-by chief most of not included in Mwaipopo's area |
| | | | | Kiangoma | Ndui | | | Not surviving |
| | | | Nyakubwa (for Kiangoma, Ndui, Mwakifuli, Ngoli) | | UPENDA | Second senior village of Mwaipopo | Nyakubwa settles disputes but is subject to veto by headmen of small groups (Kiangoma, Mwakifuli, Ngoli) | Village survives with 11 members (original or their heirs). Nyakubwa is priest of Mwaipopo, and owns the sacred trees in Mwaipopo's grove |
| | | | | Mwamsoke (Mwakipesile[1] Kiangoma) | Kalambo | | | Not surviving |
| | | | | Mwakifulikyamo (Nyakubwa) | Nsamba | | | Not surviving |
| 2 | Mwaipopo I and II of Mwaipopo | | Mwapamoke (living area[2] in common with the Nyakubwa) | | MUPEKO | Senior village of Mwaipopo. Home of Ngwila and Ndui | Mwapamoke, Mwaipopo settles disputes during Mwapamoke's absence, and subject to him in | Coming out of Mwaipopo I and his brother was to this village. Mwapamoke at present living in another district, but returns for ceremonies and to live there |

[1] The name of village of Mwakipesile, father of Mwaipopo, have perished. the names of Ngwila and Ndui will be forgotten when Mwaipopo (generation III) dies.
[2] Double indicates that the present holder is dead.
[3] Informants were not all agreed about the relative status of villages and headmen of Mwaipopo's town.
[4] Most individuals are known by more than one name—an included title when one does to common use.

Mwaipopo
ILMASAKE-9/1916-1919/1991 FN17 Appendix FN17

631
632
633

LIBRARY E-0[illegible]-[illegible]-[illegible]-

[p.153]

VILLAGES OF [illegible] CHIEFDOM (1950)—contd.

| Map ref. | Chief | Sub-Chief | Ward/Section | Headman | Village | Category | Local Authority | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (i) | [illegible] II | | [illegible] Section (Ward [illegible]) in [illegible] Division | | [illegible] | Second senior village of [illegible] Chiefdom | [illegible] | Old name known to me was [illegible]. Has originally been linked up two villages the other the headman of the senior (Ward [illegible]) died, the village reverted under [illegible] |
| | | | | [illegible] (Headman) | [illegible] | Younger brothers of [illegible] | [illegible] | Very, very small. Old men have moved to one site |
| | | [illegible] | | [illegible] | [illegible] | | | [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] |
| | | [illegible] | | [illegible] (Vacant) | [illegible] | | | |
| (ii) | [illegible] / [illegible] II [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] | | [illegible] (Ward [illegible]) | | [illegible] | Senior village of [illegible]. Chief of [illegible] | [illegible] | [illegible] I "came out" from [illegible] in the general [illegible] to the country. The [illegible] not and have [illegible] land |
| | | | | [illegible] | [illegible] | Younger brothers and a few sons of [illegible]. [illegible]'s sons are both [illegible] | [illegible] (or separate border [illegible]) | [illegible] was established after the coming [illegible] I. Formerly a section of [illegible]. Chiefs [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[P. 184]

(21
(31
(32
(43

VILLAGES IN WHICH [illegible] (1961) (cont.)

| [illegible] | Chief | Sub-Chief | [illegible] | Khalkas | Village | Category | Legal Authority | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 | Kwadiga II | | | | Kwagyi | Kwagyi, Institute of Ignis | Kalinda, Kwadiga (appointed by Kalinda within small chiefs) | 30 members. 31 married. One is known suggested that Kwagyi might be established as a village of the next generation. Living out of Kwadiga. Village agent to be of generation III, which a member of Ignis, will operate system (with men of Kwagyi II) |
| | | | | | Kiby | | Kalinda (on separate basis appointed) | 31 present a member of Ignis. Not possibly to neighborhood as a village of generation II |
| | | | | Kwadiga | Kwada (junior section) | Area of Kwada | Kwadiga, a small small town, Kiby to Kwadiga | |
| | | Kwadiga | Kalinda | | Kwadi | Formal section village of Kwadiga. Area of Kalinda | Kalinda | |
| | | | | Kwadiga (Kwadiga) | Kyagi | Kwagyi area of Kalinda | Kwadiga | |
| | | | | Kwadiga (Kwadiga) | Sadu | Kwagyi area of Kalinda | Kwadiga | Kwadiga had recently a member of a council. He was mostly Kwagyi here |
| | | Kwadiga | | Kwadiga | Lukwadu | Area of Kwada | | |
| | | Kwadiga | | Kwadi | Kwadu | Area of Kalinda | | |

## VILLAGES OF BWAZYNGA CHIEFDOM (1950s–2000s)

| Chapter letter | Chief | Sub-Chief | Ruler (Kaizima) | Enclosure | Village | Category | Legal Authority | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) | Bwazyngha, called to pass rule | | | Rises, and an gradient of Bwazyngha has one pit, cover rim | Bwazyngha | Seat of Ignacho | Bwazyngha | "Bwazyngha, with stone rule base" |
| | | | | " | Bwaga | Kyangan seats of Ignacho and Ligombo | Bwazyngha | "Bwazyngha, with build base mud" |
| | | | | " | Ichaga | Seats of Chief, and Mpinga | Chief, seats to Bwazyngha, Ruchuo seats to Ruchuga | Cross-marathons are reported |
| | | | | " | Ligombo | Kyangan residence of Ichaga | " | Rises pot, a cried |
| | | | | " | Ruchuga | " | " | Rises pot, married |
| | | | | " | Ichaga (another partition) | Seats of Ichaga | | |

Nineteen independent villages established at the 'coming out' ceremonies of Bwazyngha, Ichaga and Ruchuga sections.
There are four village partials located in cross-regions as practically independent villages. Three are cross-village divisions of fully-which are not as independent.
There are six 'burial' villages, one not established. Two likely to be completed at the 'coming out' of Bwazyngha.
The dividing line between village and village station is difficult to determine when villages have split; after the 'coming out' at Mbiru, they have been established, as did Ruchuga, the recognition of Bukhuli as a separate village and not link a ceremonial entrance.

It is to be noted that villages not only are dyads but occasionally matters. Two independent villages established at the 'coming out' of Bwazyngha mediated
• (upwards, after the death of the headman of one of them).
The established organization is credible in that Bwazyngha's evening has not been divided as sub-divided into independent distributable.

Bwazyngha

Bwazyngha, Ichaga & Ruchuga Sections

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17



101

*Sukwa, Wenya, Lambya*, are politically subordinate, but culturally distinct.' They are probably remnants of the original inhabitants of the country. But Wilson also mentions elsewhere that the *Nkoli* and *Lambya* of the upper Songwe river are two cultural groups closely related to the Nyakyusa.[1] We know that many of the small independent neighbours of the Ngonde are related to each other (*Tumbuka, Wandya, and Fungwe*),[2] their political independence being mainly due to the mountainous nature of their country.[3] Many of their names, which we take to represent distinct tribes, are merely locality names,[4] and some of the names which appear on the Tribal Map of East Africa represent only very small groups of people: for example, the *Tumbu*, between the Ivo and the Lusangwe river, were estimated in 1911 to be only 500 altogether.[5] These peoples are most probably remnants of the original Tumbuka' cluster, and through them belong to the Nyanja-Cewa group; some of them may possibly have been forerunners of the *Bisa-Senga* immigration from the Congo, or they may have affiliations with the tribes of Tanganyika, *Fipa* or *Safwa*. It is unprofitable, on the existing information, to speculate on their original ethnic grouping, and impossible, without a survey in the country itself, to discover their present cultural affinities. At present their geographical position is the only reason for grouping them together in the Ngonde cluster. The *Henga* to the south of the Ngonde are an exception. Their arrival in the country is a matter of historical knowledge,[6] and they certainly belong, not to the Ngonde, but to the Tumbuka cluster.

Similar difficulties are found on the east side of Lake Nyasa. The *Wangi* and *Poroto* north of the Kinga, the *Pangwa* and *Matengo* on the south, and small tribes on the lake coast, the *Kisi, Sumbwa, Mpoto*, &c., appear as names on the maps, but little else is known of them.

Dr. Meinhard considers that the Nyanyemanga and Ivo on the west, and the Kinga and Pangwa on the east, are culturally too dissimilar to be counted in the same group with the Ngonde and Nyakyusa.[7] However, information about these peoples is so scanty that it has been necessary in any case to base this report on the Ngonde and Nyakyusa,[8] which have been studied by Godfrey Wilson.

History

175
631.

So far as available information is concerned, only the history of the Ngonde has been recorded, and it would also seem as if this is the only one of the related groups which has developed a centralized political system, except the Nyanyemanga and Ivo. The Nyakyusa, as they spread westwards, were ruled by a number of petty chiefs, each of whom was succeeded by two or more sons, who carved out separate chiefdoms in the new area into which they were expanding. There was no paramount political authority, but a number of tiny chiefdoms, some of which to-day exceede 3,000 adult males, and some of which are far smaller than that. To-day about two traditionally

[1] Wilson, 1, 1939, p. 3.

[2] On the other hand, the Abbott Survey Notebook records that the Lambya are related to the Nyakyusa, and the Nyika have affinities with the Lambya, but the Nkoli are of a different origin.

[3] Goldsbury and Hanna, 1911, p. 12.

[4] Cardinall, 1931, pp. 3 and 38.

[5] Goldsbury and Hanna, 1911, p. 12.

[6] Fernandes, 1931 (footnote by Young, T. C.).

[7] See Young, T. C., 1, 1939, p. 60: 'For back in the hills . . . there exists still a Nyika people whose speech has been much less interfered with by the newcomers, and which apart from dissimilarity in some chief points, is not far removed from Tumbuka-Kamanga speech.'

[8] Lugard, 1893, vol. 1, p. 51.

[9] Professor M. Wilson corroborates this.

4: Tew E4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17



175 631 independent chiefs have been grouped into eleven court districts, with one chief as President of the Native Court in each. These chiefs, with two presidents of the Ndali and Lambya courts, are federated, and possess one Appeal Court and joint Native Treasury between them.[1]

The following is a summary of the history of the Ngonde, south of the Songwe river:

173 Ngonde tradition records that about 200 years ago a chief of the Kinga, Ngulowe, had two grandsons, Lwembe (from whom descended the Nyakyusa) and Chewere (from whom came the Ngonde, the Iwa, and the Nyamwanga).[2] Chewere left Ukinga and wandered west and south as far as Nkamanga, the capital of the Tumbuka country, returning thence to capture Mbande from Simbowe, the indigenous chief.[3] After this the local chiefs accepted him as their overlord, and he confirmed their status with public gifts of cloth, much as Mlowoka had done with the Tumbuka. There is little information about these earlier inhabitants, but it seems likely that they were similar to the Tumbuka, before the latter were conquered by Mlowoka.[4] There is an old tradition that Mlowoka and Chewere knew each other in their former home, and that their meeting at Nkamanga was as one between equals, at which the boundaries between their territories were formally arranged. According to Tonga tradition certain details of the accompanying ritual and the fact of his prior arrival show Mlowoka to have been recognized by Chewere as a higher authority, but this interpretation together with the circumstantial evidence are repudiated by the Ngonde tradition.[5]

175 Opinions differ as to the actual date of the arrival of the first Ngonde ruler, Kyungu. He came accompanied by five leading men, and was accepted as overlord by the local chiefs. The latter, with the immigrants, formed a class of hereditary nobles, *amabumbula*, who divided into two groups according to whether they lived at Mbande (the nobles of Ngonde)[6] or whether they lived at a distance (territorial nobles).[7] later immigrants joined one or the other group. These nobles ruled the country. The Kyungus, enriched by the ivory trade, were credited with divine powers, and lived in strict religious seclusion. Most of their male children were killed at birth by the nobles of Ngonde, and if they themselves fell sick they were killed. A constitutional change took place after the accession of the tenth Kyungu, Mwangonde: the killing of the sons of the Kyungu was stopped, and such was the prestige of the royal blood that they began to displace the territorial nobles as rulers. The sons of the Kyungu became hereditary chiefs, *sewayfyale*, each of whom was succeeded by two or more sons, who divided the territory between them as the Nyakyusa do. Each territorial noble was succeeded by only one heir. The effect of this branching of new chiefdoms was to create a number of hierarchies of small chiefdoms under one head, the great chief.[8] The relation of these political units to each other, and to the central authority at Mbande, will be considered in the section on Social Organization.

When the Ngoni first attacked the Ngonde, Mwakanangulo was the first Kyungu

[1] Wilson, J. 1938, pp. 12–13, gives seven districts, but the number has been increased.
[2] Ibid., J. 1939, p. 9; Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 20–3; Young, T. C., c. 1932, p. 56.
[3] Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 303–6. [4] Young, T. C., c. 1932, pp. 60–1.
[5] Ibid., pp. 57–60: Young also believes that they originally came from the River Chari, near Lake Chad (1933, p. 7).
[6] Wilson's terminology. [7] Wilson, J. 1939, p. 9; Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 68–71.

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17



## POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Only the Ngonde, the Nyamwanga, and the Iow seem to have had any paramount authority. Of these, only that of the Ngonde has been described in detail. The Nyamwanga had a paramount chief, the Mukoma, living over the border in Tanganyika. Under him the Northern Rhodesian Nyamwanga were always ruled by his sister, the Waitaba; directly under her were the headmen of villages. The Mukoma used to appoint his own sons or selected friends to be headmen of the larger villages. A annual tribute, mainly fish, was sent by the Waitaba to the Mukoma, and the latter could also command annual labour in his gardens. The Iow also had a paramount chief, Kafwimbi, who recognized common ancestry with the Mukoma but paid him no tribute. His country was divided into two sections, under two sub-chiefs, Mpanga and Tembya. The succession to the chieftaincy is normally the same as commoner succession, i.e. brothers, then sons of the deceased, but the order need not be rigidly adhered to.[1]

### Ngonde Traditional System

The section on history briefly indicated the position of the Kyungu. He was wealthy, owing to the ivory trade, and used his wealth to maintain political links with the chiefs and nobles of the country. At the same time he was kept in strict religious seclusion, and the real government of the country was in the hands of the nobles of Ngonde, a group of hereditary nobles, descendants of the original companions of the first Kyungu. The relations of the great chiefs (descendants of sons of Kyungus) and the territorial nobles to the capital allowed of considerable local autonomy, the Kyungu's prestige being mainly religious. Each territorial noble was succeeded by one son; each chief was succeeded by two or more sons, so that the chiefdoms tended to supplant the territorial nobles in importance and number, and the junior branches of the house of any one great chief formed a hierarchy based on descent. The great chiefs, at their accession, were recognized by the Kyungu with gifts of cloth, and they brought the junior chiefs of their house to perform homing service, *mulasa*, for the Kyungu. Afterwards the junior chiefs performed *mulasa* for their great chief, and were similarly rewarded with entertainment. The great chief might invite the territorial nobles in his neighbourhood to accompany him in performing *mulasa*, but he could not command them as he could his junior chiefs. Apart from recognizing a certain authority of superior chiefs in judicial matters, and the right of the latter to command them to hoe, or in war, the junior chiefs had almost complete autonomy in their chiefdoms.[2]

Each chief had a traditional right to demand from his own subjects milk and bananas if he needed them, and to evict any man he pleased if he desired the site for his personal use or to give to a Headman (not to a commoner), offering the evicted tenant another site.[3]

The chiefdoms[4] consisted of a number of age-villages, older and younger men living apart with their own contemporaries. At the head of each age-village was a headman (called 'great commoner' by Wilson) chosen from among the villagers by the chief

[1] Cashmore, 1934, pp. 44-5.
[2] Ibid., p. 1938, pp. 48-9.
[3] Wilson, p. 1938, p. 24.
[4] In the absence of information I do not know whether the following description of Ngonde and Nyakyusa chiefdoms and age-villages is capable of a wider application.

and the great commoners of the most senior village. The constitution of a chiefdom was that of a limited monarchy, for the chief was dependent on his great commoners for his authority. All the way up the scale, with the exception of the Kyungu himself, each chief had his own great commoners and people directly subordinate to him. The organization of families and villages within the chiefdoms was the same as that of the Nyakyusa, but the organization of a territory ruled by a noble differed in that although there were always at least two age-villages, there were no great commoners.[1]

Villages vary in size, and average from forty to fifty households. In the first instance a 'new' village is built on ground allotted to them by the village of their fathers, but a new allotment is made communally at the 'coming out', whereafter, ceremony of the young chiefs, when the old chief and his great commoners formally allot a tract of land to each village of young men, and redraw the boundaries.

In every generation each chiefdom was divided into two (they were originally immigrant groups expanding their territory, and incorporating pre-Ivuna inhabitants). The chief at his accession, or 'coming out', married two 'great wives', whose eldest sons would each be one of his two heirs, and divide his chiefdom. The number of villages which 'came out' with each young chief varied between four and eight. If he was later reduced to a minor position he might be left with only one village of adult men, and one of their sons, as people tended to move away from minor chiefdoms. This was the system which obtained among the Nyakyusa and also among the Nguruka.[2] A summary of the 'coming out' ritual is given here, instead of in the section on ritual, as it indicates some of the features of the political organization.

Usually eight age-villages 'came out' at the same time, four under each of the young chiefs. At this occasion, some thirty years after the old chief's accession, eight new great commoners were chosen. The two young chiefs were secluded for a few hours in the hut of the old chief's first wife, and received magical treatment. Then they 'came out'. The boundaries of the age-villages were forcibly drawn. After the 'coming out', each young chief, whether he was already married or not, married his two great wives, whose first sons would be his heirs. Girls who had not yet reached puberty were carried off from other chiefdoms with a show of force by the chief's men, who later were sons of their own to supplement the position. The girls stayed at the house of one of the old chief's men until their first menstruation. They were initiated together, not at the house of their fathers, but in the country of their husbands; the old men and women of the country (consequences of the ensuing chief) played the part usually played by the girl's parents and neighbours; the chief and his young men playing the usual part of the husband and his friends. After the ceremonies the girls were given as wives to the young chiefs, and separate huts were built for them in the two senior age-villages of the chiefdom. Wives married subsequently were attached in order of seniority to one or other of the two 'sides' of the chiefdom. Thus the four age-villages normally attached to a young chief were, from the first days of his official marriage, divided into two. If one of the two great wives bore no sons, the succession for that side of the chiefdom would pass to the son of the next senior wife of that side.

Between the 'coming out' of two young chiefs and the death of their own father, a delicate balance of prestige and power was maintained, senior power over their own age-villages passing to each young chief, while the old chief remained control over the

[1] Wilson, L. 1939, pp. 40-2. [2] Ibid., L. 1938, pp. 10-13.

5:Wilson E-S (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



twenty miles from Lake Nyasa (1,300 feet). A little compact country, secluded until very recently from any effective external contacts, slightly over 1,000 square miles in extent.[1]

The soil, particularly that of the higher ground in the north of the Nyakyusa country, is not in itself very rich, but, as between 100 and 150 inches of rain usually fall each year, the district is one of the most fertile in the whole of Tanganyika; two crops a year are often grown on the same patch of ground, and the African population is over eighty to the square mile. There is no infected tsetse fly and cattle are the most prized possession of the Nyakyusa.

For historical reasons, which we will discuss in a later section, the Nyakyusa have never been united under any one paramount chief of their own, but live in a number (nearly 100 at the present day) of tiny but traditionally independent chiefdoms. For these chiefdoms the numerous streams which run down from the north into Lake Nyasa and the crests of the ridges of land between them, form natural boundaries.

The country, of course, is not all of equal economic value, parts of it are stony and mountainous, other parts, and particularly the plain in the north, consist of deep and level soil; and the population is heavier on the plain than on the higher ground. Further, on the higher ground, there exist numerous old volcanic craters filled with rich moist soil and these, being more fertile than the surrounding land, are particularly valued by the Nyakyusa. Again, of the two chief economic crops of this district, one, coffee, can only be grown on the higher ground while the other, rice, can only be grown on or near the plain. And at every point their system of land tenure is partially determined by such physical factors as these.

## 3. *THE USES AND VALUE OF LAND*

The Nyakyusa use their land for building on, for agriculture, for pasture, for hunting and fishing; they collect firewood, reeds, thatching-grass, mushrooms and other wild vegetables there; they draw water from its streams and bathe daily in them; on their land they grow bamboos, bananas, *isinyanguti* trees[2] and coffee; they keep bees; they dance, they fight, they walk and lie down upon it; their land is both the receptacle of refuse and the location of religious ritual, while their doctors continually wander over its surface in search of magical medicines.

Not all these uses of land give rise to laws, moral rules or conventions, but only those uses which tend to lead men into conflict with one another or into mutual embarrassment. The only reasons for the existence of

[1] The whole of Rungwe District is 1,866 square miles, but this includes the hills of the Nkuli and Lundyo as well.

[2] I have not been able to discover the botanical name of this tree.

S:Wilson E-S (1936-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



585 and children a man has to assist him the more wealth he can produce. The man and his unmarried sons live, his wives and young daughters plant, weed and harvest, fetch water, cut firewood and cook the food; and in other practical activities there is equally fruitful co-operation within the household group.

591 When a man marries he takes his wife from her father's village to his
620 own where he lives with a group of contemporaries. Each village is in
622 origin an age-group, formed by the sons of some village of adult men who have come one by one as they reach the age of ten to twelve years and build together on ground set aside for them by their fathers. It is not decent, the Nyakyusa maintain, for a boy to sleep at home after any vigorous interest in sexual activity has awakened in him; and so, for the fifteen years or more between leaving home and marriage, he sleeps with bachelor friends in a boys' village. He and a group of friends go round in turn to the houses of their respective parents for meals, and each has his own parents' fields, but all return to the boys' village at night.

621 As the members of the boys' village grow older, younger boys just
622 leaving home begin to be refused admittance to it and so either start a
631 fresh village of their own nearby or else join a village of their own contemporaries which has already been started. Boys' villages are thus forever living off from the villages of men. At first a boys' village covers but little ground for, as its members are unmarried, the houses are small and close together and there are no garden lands attached to it. But as the young men marry one by one the village expands, houses are built bigger and further apart and some adjacent ground is brought under cultivation, until at last it assumes the normal aspect of a village of adult men.

621 A village thus consists of a male age-group with wives and children attached. Wives may be of any age and there is no such formal age grouping among them as among the men. And, as time goes on, some men too may enter the village who are not exact contemporaries of its other members. When a man dies his heir, either a younger brother or a son, often comes to live in his village; nor are strangers who apply for land in a village ever, I think, refused on the ground of unsuitable age. Villages vary considerably in size but average forty to fifty households.

At first a village of boys, as we have said, is built on ground allotted to it by the village of their fathers; but a new allotment is made ceremonially at the "coming out" (ukusoka) of the young chiefs.

•631 Every generation each chiefdom of the Nyakyusa is divided into two
622 halves, a fact which is hard to understand until it is realized that the Nyakyusa consist of a number of immigrant groups which have, until very recently, been expanding their territory within the district and

S:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



incorporating the previous inhabitants. Now saturation point has been reached; their chiefdoms cover nearly all the available land and include in their membership all the indigenous people; and the custom of dividing chiefdoms into two is doomed. At the moment, however, it is still a vital part of their constitutional law. The division of a chiefdom is apparent from the moment that a ruling chief marries his two great wives, for he builds their houses separately, one in each "side" (ubuhefu) of his chiefdom. The son of each great wife inherits that side of the chiefdom in which his mother's house is built. 631 622

When the ruling chief begins to get old the two heirs are ceremonially "brought out" and recognized as chiefs, though they do not assume full powers until their father's death. And their "coming out" is also the "coming out" of all the young men, of all the boys' villages which have been built by the sons of the old chief's men. At the "coming out" each such village is formally given land by the old chief and his great-commoners, often in a new place. 622 621

In every village there is a headman whose title, *ndfumu*, is simply a specialized use of the general term for a member of an old family who is not a chief. Every commoner is called an *ndfumu* in his home chiefdom.[1] These two uses of the term I distinguish by calling the village headman a "great-commoner." Great-commoners, then, are selected for their wealth and ability by the older great-commoners of the chiefdom and hold office for life. In the boys' villages before the "coming out" they are chosen by the older great-commoners—those in charge of their fathers' villages—on that side of the chiefdom. If they prove satisfactory their appointments are confirmed by all the great-commoners of the old chiefdom at the "coming out," if not new ones are then selected. 621 624

At the "coming out" the young great-commoners are ritually treated with medicines to give them the power of witchcraft which they are expected to use in the interests of morality, while the young chiefs are treated with medicines to make them fierce and impressive themselves and to ensure the fertility of their land and the prosperity of the people under them. [794] [790]

Traditionally the young chiefs assumed authority, each in the young men's villages which composed his own new chiefdom, immediately after the "coming out" and in the old villages in one side of his father's chiefdom when his father died. To-day the position differs for the Administration does not recognize the young chiefs at all until their father is dead. 621 622

The separation of chiefdoms established at the "coming out" is often modified subsequently. In the old days brother chiefs frequently

[1] Vide infra p. 23.

S Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



621 622 fought each other and one was sometimes reduced to a subordinate position by the other. Such subordinate or minor chiefs did not always lose all power, some men often continued to live with them, but not many, for they were poor and could not afford the feasts that prosperous and powerful chiefs gave to their warriors. Nowadays the junior of the two young chiefs, in the majority of cases, becomes subordinate to his brother immediately, for the Administration normally recognizes the senior of the two only, and a salary is paid to him alone on the old chief's death.

The number of villages which "come out" with each young chief usually varies between four and eight. But if a chief is subsequently reduced to a minor position he will often end his life with one village only of adult men and one village of their sons. For people move from minor chiefdoms and the depleted villages that are left gradually coalesce under the leadership of one of the great-commoners. The son of a minor chief may succeed to his father's position, but only one son will do so; a minor chiefdom is too small to be divided and has no formal "coming out" of its own; its young men attend the "coming out" of the superior chiefdoms.

[629]

621 623 So much in outline for the political constitution of the separate Nyakyusa chiefdoms. Some account of it was a necessary preface to the discussion of individual land rights, since it is within this political structure that they have validity. If, for example, the boundaries of a village are changed at the "coming out"—and they very frequently are—then no individual rights to village land can be maintained outside the new boundaries.

● 631 Prior to the arrival of the Europeans there was no paramount political authority among the Nyakyusa, but a number of tiny independent chiefdoms side by side, with minor chiefdoms in some cases attached to them. Of these traditionally independent chiefdoms there is none, I think, which to-day exceeds 3,000 adult male members, and most of them are far smaller than that. This smallness of scale, which is difficult at first for a European to grasp, is the fundamental characteristic of primitive society, in the organization of which personal relationships are predominant, wherein social relationships, that is, mainly subsist between personal acquaintances. In the old Nyakyusa polity impersonal relationships, effective social bonds linking together men who were personally unknown to one another, though they existed had relatively little importance.

649 184 Just south of the Nyakyusa, in what is now North Nyasaland, live the Ngonde[1] people, whose language and culture was and is very similar to that of the Nyakyusa. They were, however, slightly more civilized in that they were in closer contact with Arab and Swahili ivory traders; and

[1] Better known to Europeans as *Konde*.

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)936 F917 Ngonde F917
Nyakyusa



tion reveals the presence of some sons of other men's villages as well. Brothers, half-brothers and other relatives are sometimes members of the same village, but more often not; and if they do belong to the same village that is because they are near each other in age, and were born in the same village, not because they are kinsmen.

The members of the boys' village, which is now closed and no longer increases in numbers, continue to grow older, and after a time they begin to get married. Getting married, as we have seen, is often a gradual process; but it is not until he has his wife permanently with him that a young man can have fields of his own and eat their produce at his own place. The cultivation of land requires the co-operation of man and woman, combining on any elaborate scale in a woman's business.

As the members of a boys' village marry the village does not move but it expands. The houses are built ever bigger and further apart and the adjacent land is brought under cultivation. The boys' village with which I am best acquainted is in this transitional stage; it has fifty-three members altogether, the majority of whom are single, but some few are married, cultivate their own fields with their wives and eat food cooked by their wives in their own houses. Of those who are single some again are betrothed to girls who visit them from time to time, but each still cultivates his father's fields, and eats at his father's home.

### (c) *The Men's Village*

It is now necessary to understand the system of men's villages and the general political organization in which the boys' villages finally take their place.

The number of age-villages in one chiefdom, all the members of which are married, varies with different circumstances, but the most usual number is from six to twelve. The age system is only broken by moving or by death; when a man dies his heir usually comes and lives where the dead man was living in his age-village. There he inherits the wives, the huts, the cows and the land of his predecessor, he inherits the dead man's position in the village and often takes his personal name as well. The heir may be many years younger than his new neighbours but he is now treated as their contemporary, he sits with them at ceremonies, he shares their rights at any division of meat. The age system in the villages is also broken by moving, for a stranger may come and be granted land in a village even though he is considerably older or younger than the bulk of its members. But otherwise members of a village are roughly contemporaries.

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936) 1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



*The Chiefdom and Wider Groups*

(a) *The "Coming Out"*

128 Space forbids a full description of the relationships of villagers in all their intricate detail, but a short description of the "Coming Out" (*mwaka*) which is at the same time the most important legal act and the most exciting ceremonial of Nyakyusa life, will, I hope, make the nature of the age-village completely clear, and will also provide us with an easy transition to the discussion of the organization of the chiefdom (*ubwami*).

122 I have never seen a "Coming Out" properly; on one occasion I
131 travelled to see one and arrived just a day late when all the important action and ceremonial was over, but I have had it fully described to me at different times by several people. Every chief (*mwalifyale*) is normally succeeded in his chiefdomship by two sons, who divide his country between them. There are sometimes exceptions to this: in very large chiefdoms three or even four sons sometimes succeed, each taking a portion of the country; and in minor chiefdoms, that is in small chiefdoms which have come under the dominion of a neighbouring and powerful chief, only one son of the minor chief succeeds to the whole of that country.[1] But the rule is that two sons divide the country of their father. This rule worked well in the old days, for till quite lately the Nyakyusa have been an expanding people in a district too large for their needs; and the combined countries of the two sons nearly always, in the old days, covered a greater area of effective occupation than the country of their father which they had divided. Now saturation point is approaching, or has come, and the rule makes for ever smaller and smaller chiefdoms. Various forces are tending to the alteration of the rule, but it is still a vital part of the constitution. (*vide infra.*)

The "Coming Out" (*mwaka*) is a series of legal acts by which the country of an old chief and his great commoners is, with certain reservations, divided and handed over into the possession and control of his two sons and their respective great commoners. These legal acts are accompanied by much pomp and ceremony. It is at once the initiation of all the youth of the old chiefdom into public life, the constitution of two new
[796] political units and the proclamation of two new chiefs. The "Coming Out" not only consists of a series of legal acts and public ceremonies, but of religious ritual as well, action is taken to increase the personal qualities appropriate in a chief and his great commoners by magical means.

---

[1] These minor chiefdoms have nothing to do with the present system of subordinating some chiefs to others (*vide infra.* sec. (b)).

8:W Cam E-5 (1934-1936)936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



When the eldest sons of his contemporaries reach the age of about 22-23 years the old chief is approached by his great commoners who say: "The sons have grown up, let us make the "Coming Out" for them." After a period of delay, for he is unwilling to relinquish his own honour and power, the old chief agrees, and the "Coming Out" takes place. The two heirs, together with all the boys and young men, whether married or single, who are sons of the old chief's commoners, are summoned to attend, according to their age-villages, at the old chief's principal house. When they arrive they wait there for two days, while the old great commoners discuss with their chief where to give the young men land, and whom they will select as great commoners of the young villages. We have already noted the principles which guide their choice of leaders. In many of the young village groups there are already leaders who have been previously appointed by the old great commoners, but these leaders are, I am told, only temporary, they are never reappointed at the "Coming Out;" at the "Coming Out" "everything is made new," the boundaries of the young age-villages are redrawn, and new great commoners appointed in them; only the groups of young men themselves remain unchanged.

The legal action which now takes place comprises three events: firstly the public selection of new great commoners, secondly the public appearance and the public recognition of the two young chiefs, and thirdly the giving of land to the young age villages.

When the old men have made up their minds, one of them goes among the crowd of young men and catches hold of those they have chosen in order of their seniority: First the one who is to be leader of the senior village of the first son of the old chief, then the leader of the senior village of his second son, then the leader of the next senior village of the first son, and so on. There are usually eight age-villages of young men, of these four will belong to the chiefdom of the first son, four to that of the second. The eight new great commoners are now publicly known, four in each new chiefdom.

The next stage of the action is the one from which the whole institution takes its name; the "Coming Out." The two young chiefs are secluded for a few hours in the hut of the old chief's first wife, there they receive various forms of magical treatment and when it is finished, "then," to quote the words of a great commoner who told me about his own coming out, "the director of ceremonies said: 'Get up!' the chiefs got up, and came out of the house to us, and we, the crowd of young men, said: 'Come on!' and welcomed them. Then we all ran shouting and calling the war cry towards the next chiefdom. In the old days we would

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



[63] have invaded that country for cows and brought them back and eaten them at the new huts which we built next. But that is finished now." In this way the new chiefs are shown to their people.

[63] Finally the young men are told exactly where to go and build, and the boundaries between the new chiefdoms and the villages of each are fixed; the old boys' villages are abandoned and the houses gradually pulled down and put up in their new places. At first the men of the four age-villages of each young chief just put up rough shelters to sleep in, all together on the place where the senior age-village of each new chiefdom will later be built, but after a month or two they separate, each village to its own place, and there they build their houses.

The land is now their own, they are no longer members of boys' villages, living on land given them at the side of the parent villages by their fathers, they are owners of the soil, full citizens, with chief and great commoners to rule them.

### (b) *Organization and Life of a Single Chiefdom*

[63] [63] A few months after the "Coming Out" each of the two young chiefs marries two wives. He may be married already, but the two whom he now takes rank as his great wives (*amabe amakhulundu*) and their sons are his two heirs in the chiefdomship. Young girls, daughters of neighbouring chiefs, are carried off with a show of force from their fathers' homes by the young chief's men, who, themselves, later send cows to regularize the position. The two great wives are thus married, not with the cows of their husband, but with those of the men whose sons their sons will one day rule.

[63] [63] [63] Girls are carried off who are just about to reach puberty, and they stay at the house of one of the men of the old chief until their periods begin. When both have reached puberty they are initiated, not at their fathers' houses, but in the country of their husband, both together. At their initiation, the old men and women of the country (contemporaries of the old, retiring, chief) play the part normally played by a girl's parents and their neighbours, while the young chief and his men take the usual part of a husband and his friends. And then, after the ceremonies are over, the two girls are given to the young chief as his wives. Houses are built for them separately: in the senior age-village of the new chiefdom for the first wife, in the next senior village for the second wife; and in this separation of dwelling place is already apparent the future division of the chiefdom between their sons.

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



Within the chiefdom, and among the wives and children of the chief, §22
two "sides" (*mabafa*) are recognized. In the normal country there are, 631
at its beginning, two age-villages and half the wives of the chief on either side; for the junior wives, as they are married, are attached in a recognized order of seniority to one or the other of the two great wives, and have their own houses near them. This distinction of two sides is important in succession. If one of the two great wives bears no son, then the great commoners of the chiefdom often publicly accept the son of the next senior wife on that side as the heir to that half of the country; and, even if they do not do so during the old chief's lifetime, such a man has always a strong claim to the succession. And the two heirs each rank as head of one side of their father's family when he and his full-brothers are all dead.

Between the time of the two young chiefs' "Coming Out" and their 631
own father's death there is, between him and them, a delicate balance of prestige and power. Each of the three, traditionally, has political authority in his own age-villages, but appeals in difficult cases may be taken from either of the young chiefs and their great commoners to the old chief and his great commoners, while the religious duties of chiefdom are exercised entirely by the old chief. During this transition period the functions of chiefdom are divided between three men, each with his own great commoners to assist him. It is necessary to understand that an old chief is believed usually to die soon after the "Coming Out" of his sons. The "breath" (*i.e.* witchcraft) of the people is believed to kill him because men love his sons rather than himself. When I asked about one chief (Mwakalukwa) who did not die till about fifteen years after the "Coming Out" of his sons, I was told that his was an exceptional case; "The people loved him very much because he helped them with the Government." None the less such exceptions are not unusual. But, in any case, it is commonly said that "after his sons' 'Coming Out' the old chief's power decreases, while that of his sons increases." When he dies his wives and cows are inherited by his full-brother, and to this brother also passes the religious leadership of both the two new chiefdoms, but all general or political power now normally[48] passes to the two sons. The period of transition is over, and the control of the age-villages of old men now passes to the two young chiefs and their great commoners, half to each side. The great commoners of the old chief, relinquishing most of their secular functions to their successors, enter upon new religious duties as priests in the worship of the chief who has just died, and this priesthood, as we shall see, they hand on to their

[48] Certain recent events have altered the working of this rule in some chiefdoms. (*vide infra.*)

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



631 sons. To the dead chief's full-brother go his wives and cattle, so that property and power are usually inherited separately; in all the cases which I have investigated however, this brother has himself given some of the cows to the young chiefs, but the reasons for his action are still obscure to me. In so far as the dead chief's brother is still the religious head of both chiefdoms the functions of chiefhaship may be said still to be divided; but all the secular functions are now normally exercised by the young chiefs. And the religious functions also fall to them when all their father's full-brothers are dead.

Political authority is the general authority of one or more persons within a community, whether local or nomadic, which goes beyond the bounds of a single family; a leadership confined to no one type of behaviour, but ordering a variety of social activities. Such an authority is wielded by a Nyakyusa chief, together with his great commoners, in his own chiefdom. There a number of legal, economic, religious[n] and ceremonial activities are controlled by them; and there, before the coming of the Europeans, they had military leadership also. But before that event no man had any wide political authority beyond the single chiefdom. The chiefs of Lubaga[o] had a far-reaching religious pre-eminence, but no general or political influence at all beyond their own country.

622 578 The only extensions of political power beyond a single chiefdom before European times, so far as I know, arose from the rivalry of brother chiefs. The division of an old chief's country into two was not always accepted by the young men concerned; quarrels and fighting between them were common, and the position established at the "Coming Out" was sometimes modified by war. If one of the two decisively defeated the other, he took all his brother's cows and reduced him to a subordinate position. The land of the Nyakyusa is full of such minor chiefdoms; by the clerks who collect tax they are described as "villages," but they are 622 radically different from villages in their constitution. For, while they often consist only of a few score families, they are themselves articulated into age-villages and have at their head, not an elected great commoner (*alifumu*) but a hereditary chief (*umulafyale*). A minor chief marries in the ordinary way, like a commoner, and only one of his sons inherits his chieftanship; while his chiefdom, owing to its small size, is often simply divided into two villages, one for the old, one for the young men. To-day his position carries with it neither wealth nor power; he has some authority over his own people, but less than the great commoners of his powerful

[n] I am now speaking of the position of a chief after his father and all his father's full-brothers are dead, and before his own sons have "come out."
[o] *Vide infra*, sec: (c)

S:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



kinsmen. Though some of the reasons for his subordination are to be found in modern conditions, it is clear that many of the factors have always operated.

Wars did not only occur between brothers; but when one *chief* defeated another who was more distantly related to him, he did not, apparently ever, reduce him to a *minor* position: He either took his cows and then left him alone, or killed him and set up a brother of his own as an independent though allied chief, or else, more rarely, killed him, took over the country and directly incorporated it in his own. So that, apart from the subordination of a defeated brother and his heirs, political authority always stopped at the boundaries of each separate chiefdom.[14]

The traditionally independent chiefdoms to-day vary in numbers from 100 to about 3,000 adult men.

The coming of the German Administration in 1893 introduced a paramount political authority, for the first time, in the persons of European officials; while in 1926, a generation later, the British Administration created new Native Authorities under the District Officer and superior to the chiefs. The traditionally independent chiefs were grouped together in eleven court districts, in each district a "Native Court" was set up, consisting of the various chiefs and their great commoners, under the hereditary presidency of one of the chiefs, who thereby became senior to all the others in that court district. Salaries for chiefs have been introduced, and the senior chiefs receive far higher salaries than the others; while the meetings of each Court are always held in the territory of the senior chief (*omulafyale ophulumba*); and to it has now been transferred a great deal of the legal business which, before 1926, was transacted by each chief sitting with his own great commoners in his own chiefdom. The chiefs themselves were consulted in the selection of the Court Presidents, and those chosen were normally the chiefs with the greatest number of men in each particular court district.

In this account the term *senior chief* (*omulafyale ophulumba*) denotes the President of a Native Court, *chief* (*omulafyale*) means one of the traditionally independent chiefs, while *minor chief* (*omulafyale amandi*) means one of the subordinate chiefs, often with only 40-60 men under him.

The introduction of Courts and salaries has brought an entirely new element into the relationship between old and young chiefs (*vide*

[14] Among the Konde of Nyasaland, I am told, there was a paramount chief Kyungu, with a far-reaching political authority; but there was no such chief among the Nyakyusa.

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936);1936 F7:17 Ngonde F7:17
Nyakyusa



marriages of his kinswomen. When his father dies his father's wives and cows pass to his father's full-brother, but they come to him and his brother eventually when this man dies. While, if the young chiefs have "come out" it is common for their father's brother to hand over some, or even the bulk of the cattle, to them before his own death. And in his own half of the family, among his siblings and half-siblings on that side, a chief has far greater rights both of inheritance and of receiving marriage-cattle, than those possessed by the senior son of a commoner. So much is clear from my evidence, but it is not yet sufficiently detailed for an exact statement of rules.

Before 1915 fighting between chiefdoms was common and, except between brother chiefs, the usual aim of fighting was, not conquest, but cows; wars were generally just cattle raids. And a substantial proportion of the cows captured in a successful raid went to increase the herds of the chief. This last source of income is now supplied by Government salaries, which vary from 5/- to £13 a month.[10] The price of a cow is £2; but many shillings are spent on clothes, bicycles and beer, as well as on cows.

A chief, like any other rich man, maintains his prestige by hospitality. He constantly entertains his more notable subjects with beer, at the ceremonies of his family all his people gather in their age-villages and he kills cattle for them to eat. Chiefs seldom nowadays kill cattle except on ceremonial occasions, but in the old days of warfare they used also, I am told, to entertain their subjects with meat from time to time, in order to keep up their spirits for fighting. History is full of stories of Nyakyusa chiefs who attracted many men to their countries, and so gained great military strength, by the generosity and abundance of their feasts.

Every time a man or woman dies, a message must be sent to the chief, and at the burial he is given the whole breast and ribs (*ubukasu*) of one of the cows which are killed by the family of the dead person at that time. He has the right to take food or milk from any of his subjects if he has need of it; but he cannot take any man's beast without later returning another to him.

Apart from the now abandoned pursuit of cattle raiding the only profitable enterprises in which the members of a whole chiefdom jointly participate are those of hunting and fishing; in some chiefdoms, but not

---

[10] Salaries above £1 a month are only paid to senior chiefs. No minor chief gets a Government salary, nor do great-commoners. The local value of money is shown (a) by the tax (8/- p.a.), (b) by the wages of unskilled labour (6/- to 8/- p.m.)

8: W Gen E-9 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



631
478 all, hunting is organized like warfare and fishing is a joint endeavour, both ordered by the chief.

471
622 Every chief has a title of ownership (*ubwene nshya*) to the land of his chiefdom and can evict any man he pleases, (giving him another plot), if he wishes to build there himself; but his people also have titles of ownership to it, both collectively, under the leadership of the great commoners, and individually, each man to his own ground. It is the great commoners who, in consultation with their neighbours, give to the sons of each village land on which to build; it is they who, together, finally fix the boundaries of the young men's villages at their "Coming Out;" it is they who, again in consultation with their neighbours, grant land to strangers who ask for it, though they must notify the chief and get his approval before doing so.

627
692 As the single great commoners settle disputes within their own villages so the chief and great commoners together hear and decide cases within the chiefdom. Many of these legal actions are now settled in the Courts, but not all of them; and, even when cases are going to Court, preliminary hearings commonly take place before the chief, first. Cases are conducted and witnesses interrogated by chief and great commoners together, and the decision which the chief pronounces is an expression of their general opinion.

556
629 Among the great commoners there is an order of seniority. The leaders of the two senior age-villages of the chief's own men play a prominent part at his "Coming Out," they each have a pre-eminent authority in one side of his chiefdom, and the other great commoners rank as their juniors, some on one side, some on the other. In the old days the two senior great commoners each led a whole side of the chiefdom in war.

622
754 The two most effective checks on the power of a chief are migration and witchcraft. Military strength used to depend upon the number of a chief's adherents, to-day the scale of his salary is similarly dependent; men are quite free to move, and there is a constant flow of adherents from unpopular to popular chiefs. But unpopularity is most feared in its spiritual form of witchcraft. We have seen already that an adverse current of opinion is believed to act invisibly, as the "breath of men," against an unpopular member of a village and to make him sick. So also the adverse opinion of a single village or of a whole chiefdom is believed to have power against a chief, to bring sickness or even death upon him. As in the single village, so in the whole chiefdom the great commoners are the prime sources of this spiritual power; they are believed severally to protect the members of their own villages and jointly to protect their

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
F307? Ngonde F307?
Nyakyusa



available which are only now being settled. Colonies are established, but usually by junior sons, the seniors remaining near where their fathers built; e.g. the descendants of Mwakasungula (20) remained near Lubaga, but Mwakisambwe (30) the junior heir moved to Mbyanga about 1750 and his senior great-great-great-grandson Mwalinjo (147) lives close to Mbyanga still, while Mwalonga (82) the junior heir settled two or three miles away. Mwakyusa (98), a junior son not strictly an heir at all, but personally very popular, was defeated by his elder brothers and driven from the hills to the plain, where his descendants now live. It is not an invariable rule that the junior should move away—for example Mwambete (160) of the junior line lives close to Kambamkola where his ancestor Mwaipopo (21) is buried, and not Mwalibwele (180) of the senior line—but most often it is the junior who moves. The tradition is that the junior heir of a chief leads off his men as colonists at his 'coming out', and this may indeed have happened in the past, but the area of colonization in Mwaipopo's country (which we have observed over twenty years) was first opened by private individuals moving into unoccupied savannah forest land in search of virgin soil for cultivation, and lush grazing. The chief Mwaipopo asserted his claim to the area first by establishing a household there with some of his junior wives, and then by sending the son of a subordinate house (who could have no claim to inheritance of the chiefdomship) to live there. Nsusa, the second village headman of Mwaipopo's heir Mwankuga (150), also settled in the forest and acted as headman of the men there, but whether his move was primarily to lay claim to the land or because he had quarrelled with his chief, Mwankuga, and the other village headmen, was never very clear.[1] Then in 1953, at the coming out of Mwankuga's heirs, the junior Mwabungulu (178) was established in the colony, and is regarded by the people as 'chief' of that area, though he is not recognized as a chief by the Administration.

When a colony is established several miles are left uncultivated between it and the parent chiefdom. Mwabungulu lives five or six miles from his senior brother Mwanyilu (177) and there is an area without homesteads between them. It seems that, traditionally, each chiefdom was surrounded by a belt of uncultivated land used as pasturage, and very often at the 'coming out' both brothers merely extended their villages on to the adjoining pasture land

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 268-9.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1935) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



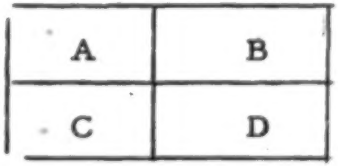
leaving a strip of pasture between them, but when the area became crowded the junior heir would establish a colony at some distance. With the increasing density of population, and of the acreage cultivated by each family, the buffer strips between chiefdoms are disappearing.

The more closely related chiefs are the nearer their chiefdoms are likely to be, as will be apparent if the map on p. 87 is compared with the genealogies I and II, but the pattern of splitting and expansion was continually modified by conquest and absorption. For example, the descendants of Mwaipasi (81) of the junior line have no chiefdom, and the descendants of Mwamwilli (84) were defeated and absorbed by Mwaipopo II (116), and the junior house of Mwakisambwe (90) appears never to have established itself. His second son named in the genealogy, Mwamukinga II (94), was a full brother of the senior heir Mwamukinga I (93), not the heir of the second house. And of the descendants of Mwankyusa (35) only one heir appears to have established himself in each generation.

Although a chiefdom was surrounded by pasture land with unoccupied savannah forest beyond it, when the heirs 'came out' their fathers moved. The old men gave the senior heir a site in the centre of the country, not exactly where his father had lived, but somewhere near the senior village of the past generation, and the old men moved aside to make room for the new village. The old men's villages diminished in size for many members had died and not all the heirs had come to live where their fathers had lived, and the homesteads were built on the periphery of the young men's villages. Traditionally most of the cultivated land was reallocated at the 'coming out' also, but that no longer happens. Nowadays, even where the 'coming out' is celebrated, the old men continue to cultivate until their death most of the fields they cultivated before the 'coming out', vacating only their homestead sites and adjoining gardens. The dominance of the younger generation is reflected in their compact villages, forming wide, straight avenues, in central positions in the country, while the villages of older men are often split, and their homesteads scattered without order. The avenues are felt to contribute to the dignity of the ruling generation and the older men are content to withdraw that their sons may 'display themselves' (ukunaga).

[602] Age, territorial, and kinship grouping interlock in a complex

Chart showing position of sections of chart on "Villages of Mwaipopo' Chiefdom." (Facing page 91)



9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

*VILLAGES OF MWAIPOPO'S CH*

| Gen. | Chief | Village | Headman | Structural Position | Land |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I | *Mwaijonga* (81) | IPINDA | *NJOBAKOSA* | Senior village of Mwaijonga | |
| | | Itiki | *Kiungula* | | |
| | | ITEBE | *NGULYO* | Second senior village of Mwaijonga | Moved for Ipc |
| | | Bukeba | | | |
| | | Itumba | | | |
| II | *Mwaipopo I* (115) | BUJEGE | MWANSAMBE (Mwegama) | Sons of Ipinda and Itiki | Moved for La |
| | *Mwaipopo II* (116) | | | | |
| | | Bujinga | Katolile | | Moved for Ipc |
| | | Lupaso | | Older section of Bujinga | Moved at com Mwankuga II |
| | | Kisyela | | | |
| | | Busirkali | | Contemporaries of Mwaipopo II | |
| | | Bulindanajo | Mwasota | Much younger men than those of Bujege | |
| | | Kibonde | Mwakikato | | |
| | | LUPONDO | *MWAIKOFU* | Sons of Bukeba | |
| | | Kyemo | *Kapela* | | |
| | | Kitule | Mwangoba | | |
| | | Kabula | *Mwakitwange* | | |
| III | *Mwankuga I* (150) | IGEMBE | MWAMBUPUTA (Mwafungo) b. *c.* 1880 active in 1955 | Sons of Bujege | |
| | Mwankuga II (151) active 1955 | | | | |
| | | Katumba | | Younger brothers and a few sons of Igembe | |
| | | Lugombo | Nsusa (active 1955) | | Moved for I members gon |
| | | Ipoma | Kabolile | Sons of Bujinga and Busirkali. Younger men than in Igembe | Got land fron |
| | | Ndongoti | | Younger brothers of Ipoma | Moved south |
| | | Kibonde (junior section) | *Mwakilaka* | Sons of Kibonde | |
| | | NJESI | KAKUJU (old & fragile 1955) | Sons of Lupondo | |
| | | Mpunga | Mwakatika | Younger sons of Lupondo | |
| | | Isuba | Mwakabumbe | Youngest sons of Lupondo | |
| | | Lukwego | Lyambelo | Sons of Kitule | |
| | | Ndobo | Nyambege | Sons of Kabula | |
| | | Kilosi | Katelule | New village | Colony in for |
| | | Kiloba | Nsusa (of Lugombo) | New village | Colony in for |

[facing p. 91; section A]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

643
622
103
631
551

OF MWAIPOPO'S CHIEFDOM[1]

| | Land | Numbers (Men or boys) 1955 | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Widows of Mwaipopo live here |
| | | | Not surviving |
| jonga | Moved for Ipoma | 6 | |
| | | | Not surviving |
| | | | Not surviving |
| | Moved for Lupando | 8 (31 wives) | |
| | Moved for Ipoma | | |
| | Moved at coming out of Mwankuga II, but not again | | |
| II | | 7 (22 wives) | |
| ne of | | | First built where Itiki is now. Driven out by Bujege |
| | | | Chiefdom of Mwakipesile |
| | | 9 | |
| | | | Disappeared by 1955 |
| | | | Chiefdom of Mwakabule |
| | | 8 (30 wives) | Mwambuputa now senior priest of country. 'Brought out' Mwanyilu. |
| n of | | 10 | Junior members including Kilasile moved to Lupando. 57 members in 1958. |
| | Moved for Lupando. Many members gone to forest. | | Nnusa now headman of Kiloba, new village in forest. |
| | Got land from Bujinga | | Akimu, son of Mwaipopo II, a former member, moved to forest. |
| | Moved southward | | |
| | | | Sub-chief Likosyela |
| | | 12 (26 wives) | |
| | | 8 | |
| | | | Mwakibweli sub-chief |
| | Colony in forest | 48 | Akimu, a junior son of Mwaipopo II, was sent to watch over this colony. In 1953 Mwabungulu was established as sub-chief of the area. |
| | Colony in forest | 156 | Possibly subdivided |

[facing p. 91; section B]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

643
622
103
631
551

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Kibonde (junior section) | *Mwakileka* | Sons of Kibonde | |
| | | NJESI | KAKUJU (old & fragile 1955) | Sons of Lupondo | |
| | | Mpunga | Mwakatika | Younger sons of Lupondo | |
| | | Isuba | Mwakabumbe | Youngest sons of Lupondo | |
| | | Lukwego | Lyambelo | Sons of Kitule | |
| | | Ndobo | Nyambege | Sons of Kabula | |
| | | Kilosi | Katelule | New village | Colony in fore |
| | | Kiloba | Nsusa (of Lugombo) | New village | Colony in fore |
| IV | Mwanyilu (177) | Lupando | KILASILE MWANSASU | Sons of Igembe Married | Occupies site by parts of I and Lugomb out' of Mwan some member and some sout make room for members of Ig the headman and Lugombo |
| | | Nsanga | KILASILE MWANSASU | Section of Lupando. Younger sons of Igembe and Lugombo. Married. | |
| | | Itiki | KILASILE MWANSASU | Sons of Igembe and Lugombo some married, some *c.* 14 | |
| | | Ndola | KILASILE MWANSASU | Sons of Igembe and Lugombo. Some married. 12 boys. | |
| | | Bujisi | Pauliki Mwambepo | Sons of Ipoma. Mostly married. | Occupies the Itebe of gen split and has to the north then by Ipo moved some c at 'coming ou Busirkali II have also mo |
| | | Ponjola | Balyemo Mwakasumbula | Sons of Kilbonde III | |
| | | IRINGA | SIKAMBOMBO KIGULEWE | Sons of Njisi. Some married. | Occupies lanc pied by Njisi |
| | | Masoko | SIKAMBOMBO KIGULEWE | Sons of Mpunga and Njici | |
| | | Katela | SIKAMBOMBO KIGULEWE | Sons of Masoko and Mpunga. Younger brothers of Iringa. Ages 15-20 years. | |
| | | Mfumbi | Batungulu Mwamusilu | Sons of Isuba | |
| | | Ponjola | Batungulu Mwamusilu | Sons of Isuba. Younger brothers of Mfumbi. Ages *c.* 12-15 yrs. | |
| | | Kitu'i | | Sons of Lukwego | |
| | | Kabula | | Sons of Ndobo | |
| | | Nluju | Mwanjotile | New village | Colony in for |

[1] A more elaborate version of this table appeared in *Good Company*. Certain misspellings and errors.
Capitals = senior village of senior headman of chiefdom.
Italics = dead.
Total No. of taxpayers (including migrant labourers) 1955: 857.

[facing p. 91; section C]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959

FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

Sub-chief Likosyela

643
622
103
631
551

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | 12 (26 wives) | |
| | | 8 | |
| | | | Mwakibweli sub-chief |
| | Colony in forest | 48 | Akimu, a junior son of Mwaipopo II, was sent to watch over this colony. In 1953 Mwabungulu was established as sub-chief of the area. |
| | Colony in forest | 156 | Possibly subdivided |
| | Occupies site previously held by parts of Bujege, Igembe, and Lugombo. At 'coming out' of Mwanyilu Bujege split, some members moving north, and some south, some west, to make room for Lupando. Some members of Igembe, including the headman, moved south, and Lugombo moved west. | 20 (including Naanga) | Kilasile first built in Katumba. Father was in Igembe. Born *c.* 1912. Made fire at Mwanyilu's 'coming out'. This village has a new name. It was originally called Mpujuso. |
| sons ried. | | | These Mwanyilu's mates. He first built here. |
| ome | | 11 | Christian village near school. Mwabungulu (178) first built here but moved to forest. Mwakagile (59) had occupied this site, then Mwaijonga built Itiki I on it. |
| | | 25 | 3 men of Bujege who had to move to make room for Lupando have built at one end of Ndola but this is irregular. |
| d. | Occupies the site first held by Itebe of generation I which split and has two tiny sections to the north and south, and then by Ipoma III which moved some distance to south at 'coming out' of Mwanyilu. Busirkali II and Bujinga II have also moved southward. | | F. of Pauliki in Busirkali. Bujisi also called Ipoma. New name has scarcely been established. |
| | | | No son of Likosyela 'came out' with Mwanyilu. |
| | Occupies land formerly occupied by Njisi | 29 (14 wives) | 17 men away at work, 12 present. Sikambombo made fire at Mwanyilu's 'coming out'. His father was in Njisi. |
| | | 10 | |
| | | 23 | |
| | | | Also called Isuba |
| ers of | | | |
| | | | Names of villages of generation IV not ascertained. |
| | | | Names of villages of generation IV not ascertained. |
| | Colony in forest | 136 | New village established for second heir Mwabungulu. who is a sub-chief. Possibly subdivided. |

spellings and errors have been corrected and the villages established in generation IV added.

[facing p. 91; section D]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



fashion. Each village is occupied by an age-set and men are emphatic that age and friendship, not kinship, are the basis of a village, but the villages of fathers, sons, and grandsons commonly, though not invariably, adjoin one another, as Bujege, Igembe, and Lupando, or Lupondo, Njisi, and Iringa in Mwaipopo's chiefdom (*vide* plan, p. 101). Each section of a chiefdom comprises half the ruling generation, and interspersed with their villages are those of their fathers and sons. Men are identified by the name of their village, section, and chief; the village name defines their age-set, the name of section and chief their generation. The section name is always that of the senior village which leads it. Generation succeeds generation in office when their heirs 'come out', but the relative position of villages (age-sets) within a generation remains constant. Since chiefdoms traditionally split each generation at the 'coming out' the men of the retired generation who remained belonged to one section only; those of the other section of their generation were members of another chiefdom. The territorial arrangements reflected in the plan of Mwaipopo's chiefdom on p. 101 are modified by the fact that the chiefdom has not split for four generations. In generation I Kibonde was the portion of the junior heir, Mwafungo (83), but he died young and his land and widow were inherited by the senior brother, Mwaijonga (82). The son of this leviratical union, Mwakipesile (118), went through the 'coming out' in generation II along with Mwaijonga's heirs, Ijonga (114, representing her full brother 115), and Mwakabule (117). Mwakipesile inherited Kibonde and Mwakabule inherited Kituli, but both were later defeated in war by Mwaipopo II and their land incorporated in his chiefdom. Mwakipesile's heir, Likosyela, and Mwakabule remained as subordinate chiefs. Though the girl Ijonga celebrated the 'coming out' in place of her unborn brother she could not rule, and Mwaiteteja, son of Mwaijonga II (younger full brother of 82) acted for her. He was finally defeated by Mwaipopo II and fled to the periphery of the country. Kabula was his village, and he was subordinate to Mwaipopo, not independent.

In generation III the chiefdom did not split because by that time the British administration was in control, and the territorial division remained much the same, Igembe and Njisi becoming the senior villages in place of Bujege and Lupondo, with Mwankuga (150) and Mwaseba (152) as the young chiefs. Kibonde,

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



Kituli, and Kabula still remained somewhat detached. In generation IV the second heir, Mwabungulu (178), has moved out to the forest and the area occupied and ruled by Mwaijonga and Mwaipopo is still one, with a division between Lupando and Iringa. Kibonde is fully absorbed into Lupando, and Kituli and Kabula into Iringa—no descendants of Mwakipesile of Kibonde and Mwakabule of Kituli went through the 'coming out' with Mwanyilu as chiefs. Kibonde, Kituli, and Kabula are subdivided into age-villages of three generations, but these are not shown on the plan. They are spoken of by outsiders by the inclusive names.

To a European the most surprising fact about the age-organization is that a young man of the ruling generation may still choose to move into the homestead of his deceased father or elder brother. We knew one young man, who had been spoken of as a possible village headman at the coming out of Mwanyilu, but shortly before the 'coming out' he chose to move into the homestead of his deceased father in Lupondo village (where his father in turn had inherited) even though he might have inherited his father's wealth in wives and stock and returned to his own village of Masoko, after completing the ritual of death and inheritance. Our informants insisted that, though the young men might rule, the older generation were the more honoured, and in inheriting from his father this man was classified as a member of his father's generation. Nevertheless many young men do *not* choose to move into the village of the father or elder brother from whom they inherit, and the villages of old men decrease in size and finally disappear altogether.

The relation between kinship and territorial grouping cannot easily be indicated by plans and genealogies for though in theory each village consists of 'sons' of a village of the previous generation (as shown in the table facing p. 91) there is considerable movement from one village to another, and the members of any adult village usually prove to have come from a number of different villages, though a boy's village consists of sons of adjoining villages. The table of members of three of the villages of Mwaipopo's chiefdom illustrates this (*vide* pp. 224-6). An analysis of genealogies showing where different members live gives much the same picture. Though the shortage of land in the coffee-growing chiefdoms of the hills and the rice-growing chiefdoms of the plain is tending to obliterate the age-village organization, the old

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



system is still the accepted form in Mwaipopo's chiefdom; the advantages of separating kinsmen in different villages are explicitly stated, and the contrast between the Nyakyusa and their neighbours in this respect emphasized. 'Certainly we do not live with kinsmen here but the Kinga do.' 'It is not good for a son to live close to his father, they will quarrel.' 'When we move to another village we consider friendship not kinship in selecting it.'

### (*b*) THE BALANCE BETWEEN GENERATIONS AND SECTIONS

The ritual cycle of the 'coming out' and the sacrifices in the groves helped to maintain a balance of power between generations, as well as between chiefs and commoners. At the 'coming out' of Mwanyilu (177) in 1953 it was Mwabuputa, the senior village headman of his father, who took the leading part. He was described as 'the greatest man in the country' who 'brings out the chief' and his manner indicated that he was well aware of his power. During the reign of Mwaipopo (116) the power of his father's village headmen, Njobakosa and Ngulyo, was apparent at every ritual. Spiritual power was shared between chiefs and commoners, but exercised ideally by a virile chief of the ruling generation and the experienced headmen of the retired generation.

Those chosen as senior village headmen at the 'coming out' are commonly older than the young chief, but village headmen are thought of as surviving their chief—it is they who were responsible for smothering him, and performing the sacrifices in his grove. The headmanship is an *office* and so long as the office is necessary an incumbent is found for it, in the person of the heir of the original holder who is so closely identified with the deceased that most precise inquiry is often necessary to establish whether a given individual is the original holder, the succeeding heir, or a later heir, successor to the successor. The Ngulyo who officiated at the rituals in 1935 was the heir of the original Ngulyo (some said the *grandson*, not the son) and he was criticized by Kasitile as being 'a young man who knew nothing'. The principle, so familiar in Central Africa, of a perpetual office[1] emerges, among the

[1] I. Cunnison, *Kinship and Local Organization on the Luapula*, Communications of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute No. 5 (1950), pp. 14-15; J. C. Mitchell, *The Yao Village*, Manchester (1956), p. 122; A. I. Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia*, O.U.P. (1939), p. 24; 'Some Types of Family Structure among the Central Bantu, in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, p. 224; J. Roscoe, *The Baganda*, London (1911), p. 3.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



ages, they sometimes build in villages of different generations. When it comes to the selection of village headmen, however, care is taken to ensure that they are indeed sons of men who came out with the previous chief, and a village like Katumba which comprised both younger brothers and sons of Mwankuga's generation breaks up, some members 'coming out' with Mwankuga's son, others acting as 'fathers'. Within a village all the members are equal subject to their headman, but a hierarchy of villages is clear.

The pre-eminence of the two senior village headmen of a chief is marked. They alone make fire with him at the 'coming out'. They alone are handed war tails with which to lead their men in battle. Each is responsible for one half of the country and a dispute not settled by the headman of the village of the defendant is reported to the senior headman in whose side of the country the village lies, and he brings it before the chief. Each senior headman has his own village, the two senior villages of the country, in which the royal ladies live; the senior wife married at the 'coming out' is established close to the senior village headman, the second wife close to the second senior headman. A chief may establish wives in a number of villages, and some at least of those he inherits from his father continue to live in his father's old homestead 'to sweep the graves', but his capitals (*ifitangalala*) are the two senior villages of the country in which his two senior wives and two senior village headmen live[1] and the names of the capitals are used not only for the senior villages but for the half sections of the generation they lead. The importance of the two senior headmen is apparent even when their generation has handed over political authority to their sons. At the sacrifices we have described Njobakosa and Ngulyo, heirs of the senior headmen of the chief Mwaijonga (82) officiated, and at the 'coming out' of Mwanyilu (177) it was Mwambuputa and Kakuju his father's senior headmen who organized the ritual.

Each village established at a 'coming out' is a clearly defined unit with its own land, and leader, and name, but villages are also segments of larger units, the half-section of the chiefdom under a senior headman, and the whole chiefdom under the leadership of

[1] Mwanyilu (177), though he had two senior headmen, established his two senior wives in *one* house, close to the house of Kilasile his most senior headman. This was explained as a temporary measure 'because they were young', but it is not the traditional pattern, and may be linked with the fact that the splitting of the country each generation is no longer accepted as the inevitable pattern.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



the chief himself. The members of each village co-operate in some measure in cultivation and herding and they form a defensive group against attack 'by day and by night'—i.e. against armed raiders and witches.[1] But there is no great elaboration of ritual for single villages. Such village rituals as occur are connected with defence against witchcraft and involve driving out a supposed witch, or receiving back a member who has fled from fear of witchcraft, or protecting the village fields against witches.[2] Most communal rituals are organized on the basis of the chiefdom or group of chiefdoms, and villages or sections participate as segments of the chiefdom.

The principle of generation and that of section hold one another in check. All those who have 'come out' together have a strong sense of unity as opposed to the generations of their fathers and sons, but every generation is split into two sections each led by an heir of the chief, and these sections have a certain territorial solidarity. It is common in Africa for organized age-groups to cut across kinship and territorial groups. The Nyakyusa peculiarity lies in the territorial unity of age-sets which occupy villages, and the manner in which the fissiparous tendencies within a chiefdom have a constitutional outlet in the rivalry between the sections of a ruling generation which become independent at the 'coming out' of the next generation.

The combination of the hereditary and selective principles of leadership among the Nyakyusa is also somewhat different from that among their neighbours. With many Central African people the heir to the holder of the office of village headman or chief is *selected*, and the most capable member of a given lineage or lineage segment appointed.[3] Among the Nyakyusa succession is precisely defined and there is no selection of a suitable heir except to the supreme and greatly feared office of 'divine king', but the selective principle is given full scope in the 'catching' of leaders for the young men's villages at every 'coming out'. It is this combination of the hereditary and selective principles which binds together chiefs and commoners and successive generations. The rules of

[1] Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 44-66, 91-127.

[2] *op. cit.*, pp. 52-4, 109 ff., 154-6, 270-4.

[3] I. Cunnison, 'Headmanship and Ritual of Luapula Villages', *Africa*, xxvi (1956), p. 11; M. G. Marwick, 'The Social Context of Cewa Witch Belief', *Africa*, xxii (1952), pp. 219-22; V. Turner, 'Ndembu Village Structure', *Africa*, xxv (1955), pp. 123-4; J. C. Mitchell, *The Yao Village*, Manchester (1956), pp. 157-63.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



inheritance ensure that a limited number of young men are absorbed into the senior generation and live with the older men, sharing their activities and from time to time holding office as headmen or priests of that generation, and the selection in each generation of young men who are *not* the sons of village headmen, or chiefs, or headmen of the past generation, ensures that commoners without office are constantly recruited to the hierarchy of rulers. In short, power is distributed.

### (c) RITUAL AND SECULAR BONDS

As in so many societies, economic and ritual links extended, traditionally, further than political links.[1] Selya was dependent upon BuKinga for iron and the Kinga came to fruitful Selya to pray for fertility. The priests who came to pray brought the hoes. The many independent chiefdoms of Selya and the Mbaka valley acknowledged the spiritual overlordship of the Lwembe by sending sacrifices to him, and it was through the network of hereditary priests like Kasitile, Mwamakunda, Mwalukuta, and Nyama of Selya, and the Kinga priests Kikungubeja, Nsyanigwa, Kyamba Kitali, and Silobwike that wider bonds were maintained. Mwaipopo (116) when he was granted a Court which gave him the secular leadership of Selya, failed to make any acknowledgement of Lwembe's traditional power, and it was Kasitile who later urged him to do so. The western chiefdoms of the Nyakyusa still buy medicines and bark-cloth from the Ndali to the west, and have done so for many generations, but no common ritual links them as it does Selya and the plain with BuKinga. The trade was of lesser importance than that to the east, for it does not seem to have included iron, though the Nyiha who share a common culture with the Lambya, the western neighbours of the Nyakyusa, are known to have been skilled smiths.[2] With the Sangu to the

[1] cf. E. Colson, 'The Plateau Tonga of Northern Rhodesia' in *Seven Tribes of British Central Africa* (ed. Colson and Gluckman).

A comparison with the frontier in West and South Africa where economic and religious expansion compelled the establishment of Government is instructive. Cf. W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, vol. ii, part ii, pp. 162-8.

[2] D. Kerr-Cross, 'Geographical Notes on the Country between the Lakes Nyassa, Rukwa, and Tanganyika', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, vi (1890), p. 289. Elton's suggestion that some of the Nyakyusa iron came from the west is discounted by Cotterill. J. F. Elton, *The Lakes and Mountains of Eastern and Central Africa* (1879), p. 371 and map, cf. J. Thompson, *To the Central African Lakes and Back*, vol. i, p. 272.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



631 782 [721] north the Nyakyusa were continually at war; they did not trade or pray with them. Thus we conclude that participation in a common ritual is, in the Nyakyusa case, directly linked with a common origin and essential trade.

643 [789] [782] [821] The divine kings, Lwembe and Kyungu, were regarded as having power over certain areas, a power closely linked with rainfall. Indeed, one informant argued that the chiefs living around Masoko had never sent sacrifices to Lubaga, 'because when it rains at Lubaga the rain does not come as far as Masoko'. He was mistaken in his facts—the chiefs of Masoko did at one time send to Lubaga as Mwambete (162), chief at Masoko, himself admitted—but the argument points to a conception of supernatural power tied to a rainfall area. This notion was not, however, applied consistently.

643 173 The balance between secular and mystical power has altered during the past ten generations. The founding heroes, Lwembe and Kyungu, came as conquerors and must surely have led their men personally; but early in the history of Ngonde the Kyungu was secluded, and power was exercised almost exclusively by the nobles (*vide supra*, pp. 40-46); and the Lwembe also was, at one period, 'not seen by ordinary men' and led a life hedged about with taboos. There is sharp contrast in Nyakyusa tradition between the active chiefs who were warriors, and arbitrators, and worked hard in their fields[1] and the 'divine king' who lived in seclusion. As we have seen, the chiefs often delegated ritual functions, with the taboos involved, to a junior kinsman such as Mwamukinga (44) or Mwakihaba (45) (*vide* pp. 79-81, 114) whose heirs succeeded to the office. It is even possible that the [178] first Lwembe at Lubaga (Mwakalebela 19) took over ritual functions from his senior brother, Kalesi (18).[2] The present tendency is for the development of secular power and its separation from mystical power. The Kyungu is no longer a god but an administrator: the heir of the Lwembes sits as an elected representative of chiefs on the Local Council. In the traditional 182 Nyakyusa society ritual played an essential part in maintaining 177 the balance between generations, sections, and social strata, and in

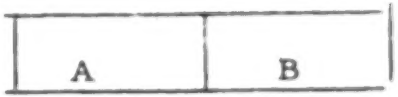
[1] In 1955 a young chief was bitterly criticized by his men because he 'never had a hoe in his hands' whereas his father and grandfather had (to our personal knowledge) been diligent in hoeing.

[2] But according to one excellent informant, Mwakisambwe (30) lived secluded while Mwakilima (31) 'fed men'—i.e. entertained.

9: Wilson
102
361
778
631
561

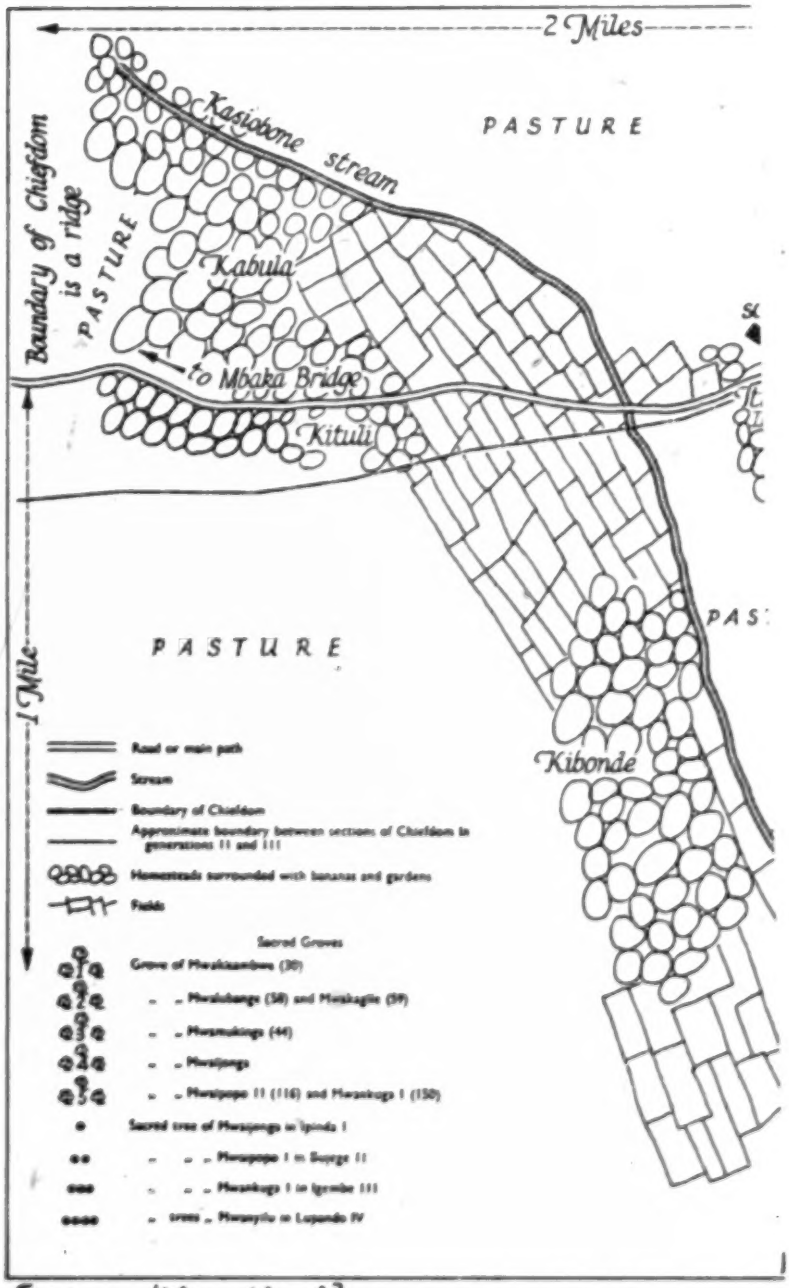
FN17 Ngonde
Nyakyusa

Chart showing position of sections of plan of Mwaipopo's Chiefdom. (Facing p. 100)



9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

102
361
778
● 631
561

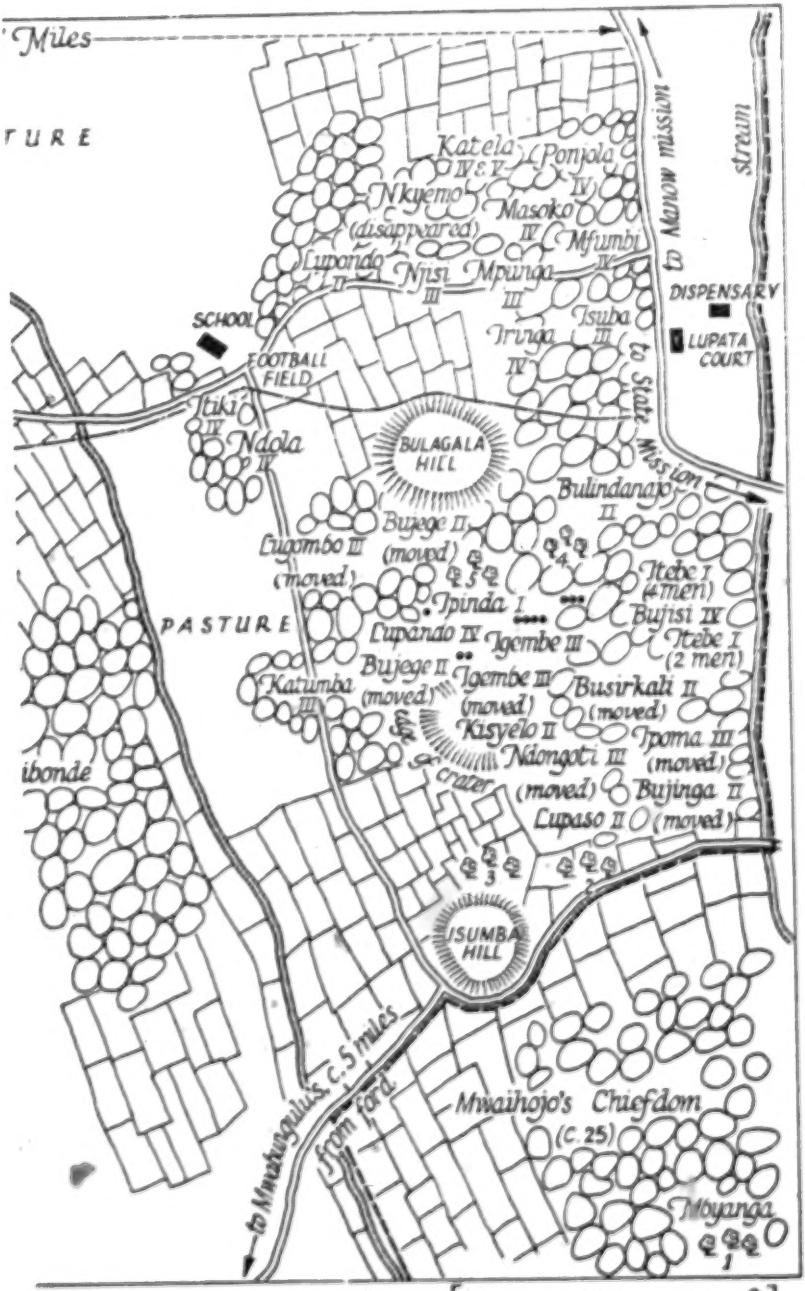



[facing p. 100; section A]

PLAN OF MWAIPOPO'S CHIEFDOM

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

102
361
778
631
561




POPO'S CHIEFDOM (C 24) IN 1955

[facing p. 100; section B]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



NOTE

It should be realized that (i) the names of the two senior villages of a generation are well known and clear cut, but those of subordinate villages are more fluid. Furthermore a village often has subdivisions, distinguished by its members by name, but known to outsiders only by the general village name. (ii) A village may acquire a new name at the 'coming out'; the senior village of Mwanyilu's generation used to be called 'Mpuguso' but 'came out' as 'Lupando'. (iii) Some villages die out altogether, e.g. Kyemo II. (iv) Some villages straddle generations. Katela in 1955 is in the same sort of position as Katumba in 1935. It includes eight sons of Mpunga who belong to generation III, but also fourteen sons of men of Masoko who 'came out' with Mwanyilu. In the case of Katumba the members who were sons of men of generation III moved to younger villages and 'came out' with Mwanyilu, among them being his senior headman Kilasile, a man of over forty. But Kilasile's contemporaries who were sons of men of generation II could not 'come out' with Mwanyilu, at least not as a group—and the members of Katumba attended the 'coming out' as 'fathers'. Boys join a village of contemporaries but may move later to a village of younger men who are of their own structural generation.

At the 'coming out' of Mwanyilu and Mwabungulu five village headmen were 'caught' and secluded with their chiefs. They represented five clear-cut villages. Kilasile and Sikambombo, Mwanyilu's two senior headmen who made fire are leaders of Lupando and Iringa respectively; Pauliki and Batungulu their juniors are leaders of Bujisi (or Ipoma) and Mfumbi (or Isuba), and Mwanjotile the single headman of the junior heir, Mwabungulu, has his own village of Nkuyu established on newly settled land in the forest. The young men of Kibonde were included under Kilasile's authority, and those of Kituli and Kabula under Sikambombo's. The names Lupando and Iringa are well known as those of sections of Mwanyilu's chiefdom, but the names Bujisi and Mfumbi are not: the young men of these villages still use the names of their fathers' villages, Ipoma and Isuba, though there is a clear territorial separation between fathers and sons. Taxes are collected under the names of Igembe, Ipoma, Kibonde, Njisi, Isuba, Kituli, and the three forest villages, Kilosi, Kiloba, and Nkuyu.

[p. 101 is blank]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



chieftainship, and the dependence upon medicines as a means of enforcing law were connected with the ineffectiveness of secular authority. Certainly the Kyungu's emergence from seclusion, and the dropping of the taboos which surrounded him were connected with his acquisition of economic power; but we know too little of the conditions that make for elaboration of ritual to postulate any general connexion between the absence of ritual in public life and the effectiveness of secular authority.

The cycle of sacrifices to the heroes and dead chiefs among the Nyakyusa is more than an ancestor cult, for it includes non-relatives among its priests and beneficiaries; but it has many of the features of an ancestor cult, among them the identification of piety with conservatism. A good man follows exactly in the footsteps of his father who becomes his god. This is reconciled with a myth of a new beginning, ten generations ago, when civilized life came to the Nyakyusa valley, and the new beginning is celebrated each generation with the 'coming out' of the young chief and his contemporaries.

All Nyakyusa rituals are cathartic in the sense that they make explicit and seek to dissipate, by their very expression and rejection, certain anti-social tendencies. In the Nyakyusa view the root of evil is 'anger in the heart' unadmitted and corrosive, and only by an open confession can it be overcome.[1] Hence in every situation of misfortune, public or private, men are pressed to 'speak out' (*ukusoya*) and admit their anger. At the 'coming out' the conflict of generations is expressed in the prolonged debate over the date of the celebration and the detailed arrangements, and in the dancing and slaughter of cattle, and is finally resolved when authority and land are handed over to the young men by their fathers. The fissiparous tendencies of a chiefdom are made explicit and canalized in constitutional form by the division of the old chief's country into two, under his senior sons; and criticism of the young chiefs is made explicit in the formal admonition by the father's village headmen. The rejection of conflict is clearest at the annual purification when men throw out the ashes contaminated by family bickering and the cannibalism of witches, and *fight* one another 'that the homesteads may be peaceful'. This fighting is 'to bring out war from within (*ukusoya*)',

[1] cf. *Good Company*, pp. 99-112. The belief that a witch or sorcerer must *confess* if the patient was to recover was the reason for the torture of witches in many African societies.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



and is therefore to be interpreted as 'confession of anger', rather than as 'rebellion'.

Sometimes there is an expression of *opposite* tendencies, both implicitly approved. The sacrifices to the heroes and at the groves of the chiefs emphasize seniority and precedence, and express the dependence of junior on senior kinsmen, but the myth, recalled in every celebration, tells of the surpassing power of the son or younger brother in the beginning of time, and the junior brother of a chief often holds office as a priest. Then there is the drama of driving away the shade and bringing him back transformed, which is so characteristic of the rituals of kinship and appears again at the cleansing of the country. Such contradictions are doubtless expressions of ambivalent attitudes among the participants themselves, and of the attempt in ritual to reconcile conflicting social principles—in these instances authority with the rights and duties of juniors, and change with continuity.

In a society without written records legal certainty depends very largely on publicity. This is apparent in the law relating to marriage contracts and family inheritance,[1] and still more so in the law of the chiefdom. The ritual of 'coming out' celebrates radical changes in social status, and the public recognition of the leaders, members, and territorial boundaries of villages, as well as of the heirs to chieftainship. Thus certainty in these matters is assured. There is no positive value of the co-regency of father and son (as in ancient Egypt),[2] but the installation of the young chiefs before the death of their father serves to mitigate conflicts over the succession. Confusion over village boundaries and village leadership often appears when the ritual has not been celebrated, for there is no public definition to refer to.

How close is the link between religious belief and practice and social structure? There is no doubt that the sacrifices to the dead chiefs and heroes and the traditional rituals of kinship supported the former political and kinship structure of the Nyakyusa. Their performance compelled co-operation between kinsmen,[3] between neighbouring chiefs, and between chiefs and people. How far then does the change in religion, begun when the first Christian convert professed his new faith, compel a change in the social

[1] Godfrey Wilson, 'An Introduction to Nyakyusa Law', *Africa*, vol. ix, 1937, p. 29.
[2] H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp. 101-2.
[3] cf. *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 190-200, 227.

10:Culliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

and try to understand the nature and reasons for change. Here, then, is a good opportunity for the study of social change – not only in land tenure as such, but also in village and family organisation, political authority and economic life.

## II

The Nyakyusa are a Bantu people inhabiting the main part of the Rungwe District in southern Tanganyika, immediately to the north of Lake Nyasa. In 1948 they numbered about 199,000 in that District, but about 10,000 men were probably at the time temporarily absent from their homes and in employment in the mines and towns of the Rhodesias and South Africa (see Gulliver, 1957), whilst about 20,000 had migrated to live in the adjacent Mbeya District to the north.

The tribal area comprises a confined geographical basin surrounding the northern end of Lake Nyasa. It extends only about 40 miles from the tip of the lake at 1,550 feet above sea level to the Poroto Mountains in the north at 8,000 feet; and from east to west is only about 30 miles, from the almost sheer walls of the Livingstone Mountains (with peaks up to 10,000 feet) to the Ndali Highlands (rising to about 7,000 feet). There are therefore unusually large ecological differences within so small an area. Three major regions are to be distinguished: the "Northern Highlands" over about 4,500 feet, the low-lying "Lake Plains" in the south, and the "Central Region" in between. Everywhere rainfall is reliable and high, averaging at least 100 inches annually[1], and this amply compensates for a certain poverty and misuse of the soil, although (and particularly in the Central Region) it brings dangers of soil erosion. Except in the highest parts the banana is the staple food, supported by maize, beans, finger millet and groundnuts. In the Northern Highlands coffee has become well established as the principal cash crop: in the Lake Plains paddy rice cultivation provides both a food and a cash crop: in the Central Region the country is too low generally for coffee and too high and dry for rice; consequently cash-cropping is considerably inferior and the people's standard of living is rather poorer.

The Nyakyusa and their country tended for a long time to be relatively isolated from the outside world by high mountain walls and rain-soaked roads. In addition, or because of it perhaps, they developed an almost unique culture which was supported by considerable conservatism and high insularity. They still continue to regard their African neighbours beyond the mountains as their social and cultural inferiors. The turmoil of the slave-trade in Central Africa passed them by; in modern times they have not enthusiastically accepted Christianity and they have refused to take up the use of Swahili, the Territorial *lingua franca*. In recent years, and most especially since the end of World War II, they have, however, accepted and pushed forward with vigour a rapid and extensive economic development, involving particularly the production of coffee and paddy as cash crops, and large-scale labour migration to the south in the high-wage mining industries. The multiplicity of petty, often tiny, independent chiefdoms has been reorganised to provide four local government areas, each under a Rural Council, in which the old chiefdoms have become something like parishes[2]. Although much of the old conservatism and narrow parochialism persists, yet there is now an atmosphere of accepted change, of a keen desire for economic development, and a general acceptance of a cash economy.

Probably the most significant feature of modern life in the Nyakyusa country is the increasing scarcity of land for agriculture in relation to the

1. At Tukuyu, in the Northern Highlands, annual rainfall averaged 99.28 inches between 1919 and 1952; at Kyela, in the Lake Plains, the average between 1940 and 1951 was 106.21 inches.
2. See Kingdon, Z.E.: The institution of a system of local government by African rural councils in the Rungwe District, Tanganyika; *The Journal of African Administration*, III, 4, October, 1951.

10:Culliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

631 628 Age-villages combined to form a chiefdom under the hereditary chief, *mwale/yale*, but active co-operation between villages thus associated was often slight; indeed in the larger chiefdoms there commonly existed intermittent animosity which might break out in raiding or even civil war. The integrity of these larger chiefdoms was weak – for example, when the Nyakyusa were attacked by Sangu and Ngoni war-parties, and later by the Germans, villages of the same chiefdom conspicuously failed to join in common defence. Similarly the land affairs of one village were no concern of any other, and each jealously guarded its own rights.

631 162 None of the chiefdoms was large; smallness of scale is typical of Nyakyusa political organisation and social attitudes. In 1955 the smallest indigenous chiefdom contained only 36 men. In 1948 55,700 people were divided amongst about 18 indigenous chiefs, but undoubtedly had not the Colonial Government frozen the system there would have been rather more – at least five more. Today there are 12 recognised "administrative chiefs", amongst whom five have each less than 3,000 people under them, and the largest chiefdom contains fewer than 10,000 people – the average is just over 4,000 people.

631 361 Nevertheless the chiefdom, the collection of villages, was important, because in the creation of the chiefdom villages were created, and in its development the villages developed, matured and died away. A village survived only so long as its members lived and by the nature of the age-organisation there was but little possibility of the recruitment of new members, for villagers' sons left to form their own new villages. Their sons eventually came to comprise the core of the new chiefdoms.

642 643 796 In connection with the constitution of a Nyakyusa village and with land tenure, the significant feature of the chiefdom was its establishment, together with the induction of a new chief, at the great "coming-out" ceremony, *ubunka*. In brief, each chief was succeeded by two of his sons – the eldest son of each of the senior houses of the chief, i.e., of his first two wives. At the "coming-out" ceremony, when the sons were still young men and their father was not a particularly old man, the old chiefdom was divided into two, each part coming under one of the new young chiefs. Before this critical occasion – at which much important ritual was performed – the younger men of the old chiefdom had already moved away from their fathers villages and had established their own incipient villages nearby, each one containing a group of coevals. A Nyakyusa boy from the age of about seven years could not continue to live with his father and mother, but, in company with his equals, built his own hut on a site adjacent to the main village as indicated by the fathers' headman. Until the "coming-out" ceremony these youths' villages came under the control of the old village headmen; but with the induction of the new chiefs they achieved independent status, each with its own headman appointed from among its members by the old headmen. Each new village was allocated a new building site and a new arable area, and quite commonly the old villages, the older men, moved away a little in order to give the younger men adequate access to the land, for it was considered that the young men's needs for land were paramount.

631 342 After this wholesale reorganisation of the old chiefdom, when new villages were established and new boundaries demarcated,[1] the old chief himself, the old headmen and the older men (the "fathers") gradually retired from active public life. The old chief was supposed to commit suicide after a time (or was quietly killed off) in order to leave the field clear for his sons; the old headmen became the religious and ritual leaders of the new chiefdoms, with the flavour of elder statesmanship, and the old men's

1. "At the "come out" it is said that "everything is made new", boundaries are redrawn and the new chiefdoms and villages of the young men are almost totally incorporated". Wilson, G., 1938, p. 31.

villages grew ever smaller and became extinct as their members gradually died off in old age.

A Nyakyusa village, then, owed its being to this most significant political, social and religious event. Each village had its area approximately demarcated, and each headman was ritually and magically strengthened in order to lead and protect his men and their families.

This particular system operated satisfactorily in the demographic and land-using conditions of the old days. By the process of bifurcation, briefly described above, new chiefdoms and new villages were formed for each generation. Although the population appears to have been increasing rapidly there was always sufficient land to create two chiefdoms where one had existed before, and to create new villages and more villages than had existed before in the old chiefdom. The two new chiefs were able easily to move apart and find sufficient and more than sufficient land for their needs.

The system of bifurcation, the ideal of the Nyakyusa, did not always work out so neatly in practice – at any rate it often did not in the Lake Plains. Sometimes it did work; for example, the present chiefdoms of Lazarus and Koroso are the two parts of their grandfather's single chiefdom, which split up under their respective fathers. Similarly, the present Mwakipesile and Mwamasangula chiefdoms stemmed from a single unit, whilst the Mwakipesile chiefdom itself today is really two indigenous chiefdoms, but the Government would recognise only the senior brother's claim to chiefship and allowed him authority over the whole. Even where a single new chiefdom succeeded the old (frequently as the result of civil war in which one brother subjugated the other) the essential dichotomous arrangement persisted so that the resultant single unit had two distinct halves, each with its own head with his villages and headmen. In any case, whether traditional bifurcation occurred or not, and right down to modern times, new villages have been established at the time of the "coming-out" of the new chief. The basic village system showed greater persistence and remained truer to type than did the chiefdom and the wider political system.

The real authority of a Nyakyusa chief was not in general very great, although individuals here and there achieved personal importance. A chief was accorded a great deal of prestige and honour, and by tribute and gifts he frequently became pre-eminently wealthy. He was supposed to be kept informed by his headmen of all important village affairs and to approve all matters concerning the land; but the village headman was in fact the real land authority, who attended to the details of land allocation and land use within his village. A chief could not do this, and in fact only in so far as he had the support and loyalty of his headmen had he any authority at all. "A chief is a chief because he has headmen," one informant put it to me – he was a prominent chief himself. A villager said: "A chief does not own the chiefdom, or the land. We, the people together, own it." A chief could, without notice or advice, take any unoccupied land for the use of himself or of his kinsmen, but he could not allocate it to others; both headman and villagers would have indignantly and successfully protested had he tried, as some occasionally did. Land disputes, an uncommon feature in a country where land was plentiful, were settled by the headman of the village in question; they were the private affairs of the village and the chief had no right of interference. Inter-village disputes first came before a meeting of the headmen concerned, with perhaps the assistance of the senior headman of the chiefdom. Only if a dispute could not be settled and if it seemed likely to threaten general peace within the chiefdom would the disputants go before the chief himself, who even so relied and had to rely heavily on his headmen to secure a settlement. So delicate was his position that he might be unable to resolve inter-village disputes for fear of witchcraft reprisals against him by the unsuccessful party.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

of the father. The old principle that every man had the right to arable land applied no less strongly to the young men, married or bachelors. Today most headmen will refuse to entertain the applications of young bachelors for land, and in this they merely represent general public opinion. But many young husbands likewise cannot obtain land, or only an insufficient amount.

Consequently, the following case-history, which I recorded for one young man, is not unusual. In 1955 he lived in the Mlangali young-men's hamlet, attached to Mpunguti village in Mwakipesile's chiefdom, where his father lives. He was about 27 years old and had a wife and one child. Twice he had been to work in the mines and from the profits of this employment he had completed his bridewealth payment and had bought, in addition, three cattle, a bicycle and some good clothing. He thought he would probably go away again. Behind his house his wife had about 300 square yards of bananas and there was a tiny patch of cassava. This man had no other land, but he assisted in the heavy labour on his father's holding (about 1.7 acres in all) and by family convention he normally took for his own use the paddy crop of a small strip there; he insisted, however, that he had not been given this strip outright and that it remained at his father's pleasure. He had an unmarried half-brother about 22 years old who had not obtained even that concession at the time. Their father was about 55 years old and had two other sons who were still boys. The young man himself had been refused an allocation of land by the headman on the grounds that (as the headman well knew) he had the use of this strip of his father's land, and also because, as the eldest son, he would be the principal heir on his father's death. He was clearly worried about his future, for he did not wish to go abroad again and leave his wife and child; but he did not see how he could stay at home without seriously lowering his standard of living to little above subsistence level.

I quote this brief case-history not necessarily as typical – though I think it probably is – but as an actual illustration of the present state of affairs as they affect an individual.

### The Modern "Chief" and the Land

Most of the traditional chiefs, *abanyafyale*, have been recognised and salaried under the Native Authority, and they are officially referred to today as *abatwa* (s. *ntwa*). Some of the smallest chiefdoms have been absorbed administratively by their larger neighbours, and, although they are still recognised by the people, their *abanyafyale* have lost very much of their earlier prestige and authority. In the Lake Plains the modern chiefdoms are often rather larger than is usual amongst the Nyakyusa,[1] but they are, of course, small in comparison with the size of most African chiefdoms in Tanganyika.

The slightness of the traditional authority of the chief in land matters has already been noted (pages 7-8) and in general this still holds. In European times, however, the recognised chiefs have been given an increased authority and prestige as the local intermediaries between Government and people, and until recent years they were almost the only local instruments of the Government amongst the Nyakyusa. They have been backed by the all-powerful European, who preferred to deal with single, recognised individuals thought to have prime authority in a locality, and the European officer has been encouraged in this notion by an over-enthusiastic policy of indirect rule. Such chiefs were able to assume a degree of power well beyond the traditional limits, and to aggrandize themselves thereby. The ordinary commoner was never quite sure how far his chief was individually claiming more than he

1. On the numerical sizes of chiefdoms see supra, page 6.

11:Thwaites C-5 (ca. 1942) 1944
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

[P.236 A]

# WANYAKYUSA AGRICULTURE

By D. H. Thwaites, Agricultural Assistant, Tanganyika Territory

131 The Wanyakyusa occupy the District of Rungwe in the Southern Highlands Province. The district lies between 9° and 9½° S. latitude at the northern tip of Lake Nyasa. The altitude 133 ranges from 1,500 feet to 9,500 feet. The district is divided into twelve chiefdoms. The 631 Administrative Headquarters are at Tukuyu, which was known before the British occupation as Neu Langenberg.

*Inhabitants*

The local people are not indigeneous to this 101 area. They came, tradition has it, from [173] Mahenge via Ukinga after many tribal fights. They are akin to the Wahenga in Nyasaland bordering on the Tanganyika boundary. It is 191 estimated that only 10 per cent of the Wanyakyusa speak Kiswahili. According to the 1935 161 census the total poulation was 153,204. The 162 total number of tax-payers in 1942 was 35,304, or 23.04 per cent of the total population.

181 The people themselves are extremely industrious and intelligent. As there are 90 people to the square mile, living conditions are 105 crowded and emigration is continually taking place. The people are partial to litigation over cattle and women. The number of cases heard annually in the Native Courts is about 6,000. There is no one historical and traditional head of the tribe. The twelve Chiefs are, in reality, hereditary Headmen who have been selected by Government to be Chiefs. They are in effect only *primi inter pares* in native eyes, the outlook of the people being unusually democratic for a native tribe.

105 The people live in houses made of wattle and daub or bamboo frame, with thatched 342 roof, and villages are sited mostly along ridges. 361 Rectangular houses are now built instead of the round huts of former days. They often stand in rows with a main street down the middle with bananas in the background. The more progressive natives build with sun-dried or burnt brick. Stock are stalled in the same house owing to the prevalence of thieving, but sleep in separate rooms.

*Climate*

132 The rainfall of the district varies in the different areas. In Tukuyu itself the annual average for 25 years (1918-1942) is 100.22 inches. On the Lake shore the average is probably higher, but no continuous statistics are available. The heaviest rainfall months are from December to May, but, in most years,